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FACULTY OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Department of Psychology

Title: The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders

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Declaration

I declare that the mini-thesis entitled '*The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders*' is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Signed......................................

Roxanne Appleby

09 August 2023

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Abstract

In pursuit of the principles of restorative justice in South Africa, local legislation has accorded great responsibility to the non-governmental sector to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration processes for youth who have been in conflict with the law. Youth offender rehabilitation programmes have received considerable attention in local literature, often deliberating the effectiveness of such interventions and recognizing the role of community stakeholders in the attainment of positive and sustainable rehabilitative outcomes. However, a scarcity of knowledge exists on the psychological impact on those leading such programmes. This lack of understanding has cascading consequences on stakeholder mental health, as well as on the overall national quest toward restorative justice that promotes the healthy and effective rehabilitation of youth offenders. Aiming to address this research gap, the current study adopted a qualitative approach to explore experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support among facilitators of rehabilitation programmes of youth offenders in South Africa. While adhering to the recognized research ethics guidelines and norms, the study employed an exploratory research design where semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted with nine representatives of the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO). Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to recruit participants who facilitated at least one youth offender rehabilitation programme. Following verbatim transcriptions of the recorded interviews, thematic analysis was used to produce themes and subthemes that were discussed in relation to relevant literature and theoretically formulated within the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. The key findings suggest that facilitators of youth offender rehabilitation programmes face various challenges, including limited resources, unrelenting work demands and lack of collaboration between key stakeholders, leading to experiences of stress and anticipating, to some extent, facilitators' resulting coping strategies. Despite a general perceived availability of social

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support, findings confirm that coping efforts include mostly those which lessen or avoid the emotional load associated with working in the rehabilitation context and which rely on a perceived ability to effect change. Recommendations are provided with a focus on access to organizational support and mental health services that ensure overall well-being and which ultimately contribute to South Africa's reform agenda for offender rehabilitation and reintegration as envisioned by the Department of Correctional Services.

Keywords: Rehabilitation, Reintegration, South African Rehabilitation Programmes, Youth Offenders, Community Stakeholders, Stress, Coping, Perceived Social Support, Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

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1. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter One introduces and orientates the research according to context, rationale, research questions, aims and objectives. The chapter also introduces the reader to the theoretical framework within which the study is anchored and closes with a delineation of the structure and organization of chapters of the mini-thesis.

1.2. Background

The low socioeconomic environment in which many South African youth find themselves increases their exposure to a number of risk factors, including poverty, violence, gangsterism and illicit activity (Clark, 2012). Restorative justice is an important component of offender rehabilitation in South Africa and informs numerous programmes facilitated by the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and/or Department of Social Development (DSD) in partnership with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs) (Ngabonziza & Singh, 2012). Defining offender rehabilitation as multifaceted, the South African White Paper on Corrections describes this process as a mutual commitment between government and society to rectify offending behaviour, facilitate human development and promote social responsibility (DCS, 2005). The Community Participation Policy, endorsed by the DCS (2005), speaks to the need for communal efforts in enabling corrective emotional experiences, providing social support and facilitating goal-directed behaviour among youth offenders as they progress through the rehabilitation and reintegration processes. A range of community stakeholders have been identified as key players in the restorative justice system, some of which include local communities, community-based organizations, NGOs and faith-based organizations (DCS, 2005). Widely accepted key players in South African restorative justice include NPOs such as

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the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders (NICRO) and Khulisa (Ngabonziza & Singh, 2012).

A great deal of local and global literature has focused on the subjective experiences of offenders who have progressed through the justice system, ranging from incarceration to reintegration into mainstream society (Chikadzi, 2017; Fagan & Kupchik, 2011; Ferrer et al., 2010). Literature has also explored subjective experiences of individuals working closely within the context of the justice system, such as correctional staff, where challenges such as lack of resources, physical threat, lack of recognition, reduced sense of personal accomplishment, exhaustion and emotional burnout have been identified (Botha & Pienaar, 2006; Lambert et al., 2015). Moreover, studies within South Africa have explored, compared and evaluated communal rehabilitation efforts among youth offenders (Herbig & Hesselink, 2012; Ngabonziza & Singh, 2012). These studies have focused largely on reintegration programmes, such as diversion programmes facilitated by NGOs, and their role in reducing *recidivism* (aptly defined as relapsing to criminal activities following a remission; Fazel & Wolf, 2015). Few studies, however, have investigated subjective experiences of community stakeholders working with youth offenders in South Africa (Arendse, 2007).

While the DCS has identified rehabilitation as a key objective in reducing recidivism, individual treatment is not always attainable, placing limitations on the availability of resources within South African correctional services (Ngabonziza & Singh, 2012). It is then vital that youth rehabilitation and its development in the restorative justice system are understood within the South African context. Unintended consequences resulting from a legal framework that seems inadequate in providing a comprehensive setting within which rehabilitation can occur have a direct impact on the implementation and effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes among youth offenders (Gxubane, 2018). In a country where crime is still endemic (Crime Stats SA), the mutual obligations embodied by the DCS and

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community stakeholders in offender rehabilitation indicates that the responsibilities placed on the latter, such as NPOs, are likely to increase demands for accessible services within an already under-resourced system (Herbig & Hesselink, 2012). The significant role attributed to community stakeholders within the restorative justice system by the DCS has led to offender rehabilitation programmes receiving considerable attention in local literature, nonetheless with a very restricted focus (Gwatimba & Raselekoane, 2018; Gxubane, 2018). Community stakeholders are often talked about within the context of youth offender rehabilitation in South Africa but are rarely spoken to with regard to their own experiences within the important roles that they undertake. Brief mention has been made of the influence of limited access to services and poorly defined responsibilities of key players on the experiences of stakeholders who facilitate programmes of this nature (Gxubane, 2018). However, there is a noticeable gap in current literature in addressing the subjective and psychological experiences of community stakeholders within this context. Thus, against this background, the aim of the present study was to explore the subjective experiences of stress, coping resources and perceived social support among community stakeholders managing and facilitating youth offender rehabilitation programmes.

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1.3. Problem Statement

Given the high recidivism rates in South Africa (Bello, 2017), there is an increasing responsibility of community stakeholders towards the process of rehabilitation of youth offenders in the country. This places intensive demands on individuals facilitating programmes aimed at youth offenders. Literature has focused extensively on the rehabilitation and reintegration processes from the perspective of the offender (Lambie & Randell, 2013; Blagden & Perrin, 2016; Kavanagh & Borrill, 2013; Parker et al., 2014). However, few studies have looked at the psychological and personal impact of working with youth in rehabilitation contexts from the perspective of the individuals who facilitate these

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processes. While previous studies significantly demonstrate the wider social, psychological and economic implications of offender rehabilitation and reintegration (Muleya, 2021; Roestenburg & Emmerentie, 2012), it is equally necessary to explore these factors from the perspective of those who act as mediators in the integrative experiences of offenders. It therefore becomes imperative that the subjective experiences of the stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation of youth offenders becomes a priority research area.

1.4. Rationale

Local studies on the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes have shown that recidivism rates continue to prevail, despite efforts to achieve the contrary (Chikadzi, 2017). In attempts to understand this, research has targeted the perceptions of offenders and their families on rehabilitation processes (Ngozwana, 2017). Several studies have likewise examined the implementation and effectiveness of local rehabilitation programmes throughout the years, though frequently through a social work or criminology lens (Arendse, 2007; Cupido et al., 2005; Mangwiro, 2020; Maphosa & Rasool, 2017; Ntuli & Singh, 2019). However, little focus has been shifted onto the contextual and psychological challenges faced by those who are implementing such processes within an already under-resourced system. This calls for a need to understand the conditions around facilitating rehabilitation programmes in order to gage their impact on not only participants, but on stakeholders too. Thus, the exploration of the experiences of community stakeholders involved in facilitating youth offender rehabilitation programmes is necessary in clarifying this impact, addressing gaps in the literature and informing the current offender rehabilitation climate in South Africa. Furthermore, this study aims at contributing to the understanding of the personal and psychological limitations faced by community stakeholders within the context of offender rehabilitation. This study likewise aims to inform wider policy initiatives directed at managing and supporting those working in the rehabilitation of youth offenders.

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1.5. Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following three broad research questions:

1. How do community stakeholders experience working with youth offenders involved in the rehabilitation programmes?
2. What is the nature of the stress experienced by the community stakeholders in the execution of their work, and how do they cope with the stress experienced in their work with youth offenders?
3. What is the role of perceived social support in coping with stress associated with facilitating rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders?

1.6. Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study was to explore stress, coping and perceived social support of community stakeholders within the context of youth offender rehabilitation within South Africa. The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To identify the challenges and stressors that community stakeholders face in managing and facilitating rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders.
2. To determine what coping resources community stakeholders have adopted in order to manage the demands of their role in facilitating rehabilitation programmes among youth offenders.
3. To explore community stakeholders' perceptions of the social support available to them within the context of youth offender rehabilitation.

1.7. Theoretical Framework: Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The conceptualization of stress has been revisited by many theoretical models which have attempted to explain the aetiology of the complex phenomenon through various lenses. Theoretical explanations have included, among others, *stress* as a response, as an external

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stimulus, and as an individual-environmental interaction (Cooper & Quick, 2017). Focusing on the latter, transactional understandings of stress have highlighted the various cognitive-phenomenological processes that permit meaning-making of one's environment. These conceptualizations have described the transaction within which stress may arise as relational and dynamic in nature (Lazarus, 1966). In considering the bidirectional pathway of the intricate transaction between an individual and their environment, it is inherent, through this lens, that neither the individual nor the environment produce stress single-handedly.

In accordance with the above, this study was anchored in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) *Transactional Model of Stress and Coping* (TMSC; see Figure 1 for a summary diagram). The model encourages a deeper understanding of the dynamic and transactional processes of stress and coping, as well as subsequent outcomes and consequences associated with such processes. This is appropriate within the context of facilitating youth rehabilitation programmes, given that this milieu is already typically associated with limited accessibility to external and possible internal resources that have been linked to the reduction of stress symptoms (Mathur & Clark, 2014). Thus, the model was deemed as befitting as it guides a deeper exploration into stress, coping and perceived social support among facilitators of these programmes, placing a specific focus on how these factors interact with one another to produce particular outcomes.

In their model, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) note that individuals continually engage in the appraisal of stimuli in their environment in attempts to ascribe meaning to events. *Appraisals* are generally subjective and depend on an individual's estimation of their ability to cope with stimuli that may be appraised as threatening or harmful, typically referred to as stressors. Lazarus (1991) notes that appraisals integrate two components. These include: (i) an individual's set of beliefs, values and goals, as well as (ii) external environmental factors,

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such as resources and demands. It is then the multifaceted interplay between these two components that typically defines an individual's appraisals (Lazarus, 1991).

Within the transactional approach, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished between *primary* and *secondary appraisal*. The first entails the assignment of meaning to a particular individual-environmental transaction while evaluating this according to its significance in relation to the individual's well-being. Transactions may then be presumed to be (i) benign-positive, in which a positive effect is exerted on the individual's well-being; (ii) irrelevant, where no significance to one's well-being is noted; or (iii) stressful, in which a transaction is further deemed as either harmful, threatening or challenging (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The authors note that the aforementioned differentiation between stressful transactions further impacts an individual's experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For instance, threat and harm appraisals typically result in an experience of harm, damage or loss, and are characterized by negative emotions. Conversely, challenge appraisals provide a sense of hope for prospective reward and growth, under the circumstances of perceived sufficient and efficient coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These typically evoke positive emotions.

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In addition, secondary appraisal encourages an assessment around how to manage the stressor and its consequent distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In other words, the individual identifies and evaluates the coping resources, situational variables and coping styles available to them, and determines how these will be implemented in relation to the stressor.

In response to the appraisals, the authors conceptualize *coping* as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (Lazarus &

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Folkman, 1984, p. 141). Hence, these efforts distinguish between an individual's beliefs around whether they possess the necessary resources, or not, to respond effectively to the challenges of a stressor. In experiencing stress as a system of appraisal, response and adaptation, the model identifies two types of coping, namely *emotion-focused* and *problem-focused coping*. The latter aims to alter and manage the stressor itself, while the former involves regulating emotional responses resulting from the identified stressor, while changing the meaning of the stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The authors affirm that outcomes rely on coping efforts, and when supplemented by new information from the environment, result in cognitive reappraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This process allows the individual to conclude whether their coping efforts were successful and/or whether the nature of the transaction has changed. The individual's engagement in coping strategies and subsequent outcome are then contingent on whether a positive affect has resulted from successful adaptation to a stressor, or alternatively whether a negative affect has been fortified by failure to adjust to such stressor.

Furthermore, amidst these complex transactions lie factors such as uncertainty, imminence, duration, timing and prior knowledge or experience of an event over the course of an individual's life (Lazarus, 1991). These factors likewise influence the stress-appraisal process and account for how this may vary between individuals experiencing similar environmental settings (Lazarus, 1991). Further external factors, such as challenges, demands or perceived social support, as well as internal factors, such as resilience and self-esteem, are similar contributors to the appraisals and outcomes of an event (Harrison et al., 2021). Thus, personal and social determinants constitute factors of which Lazarus and Folkman (1984) describe as functioning interdependently to influence stress-appraisal.

Conceptualizing stress, coping and perceived social support within a transactional framework rests on the assumption that these processes are at the mercy of a range of

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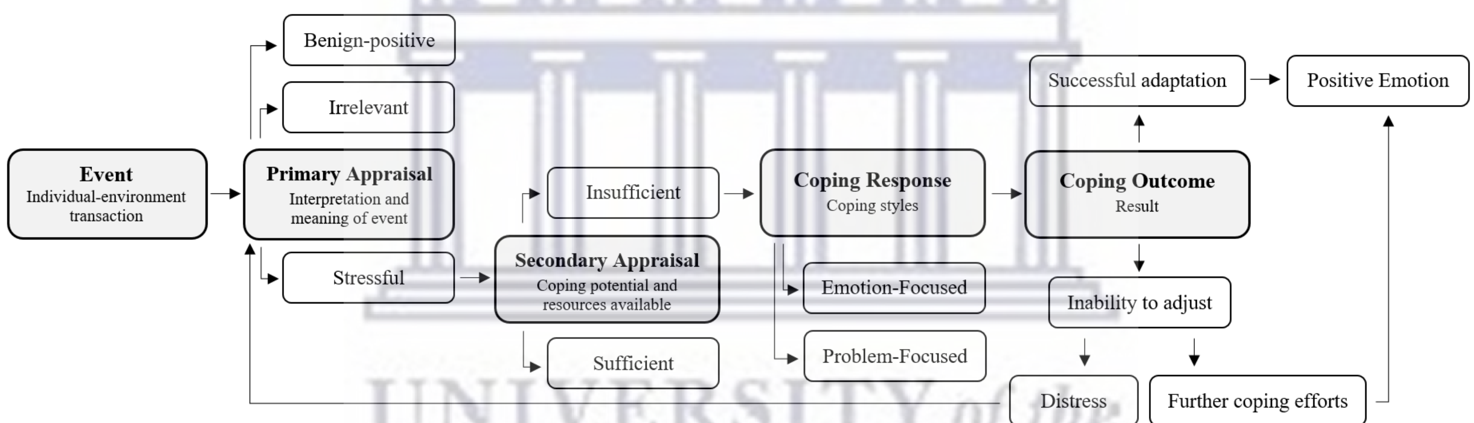
mutually supporting factors that work alongside one another. Within the context of youth offender rehabilitation, and furthermore within non-profit settings, this model is useful in underlining different forms of appraising and coping with challenges specific to these contexts within South Africa. This ultimately allows the development of a greater understanding of the role of social support in coping with stress associated with facilitating rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders, as well as provides awareness on the challenges faced by those within these contexts.

Figure 1

Summary of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Model of Stress and Coping



1.8. Mini-Thesis Structure: Organization of Chapters

The mini-thesis is presented in six chapters and is structured according to the following subsections:

Chapter One (Introduction) orientates the study to time, place and context. This chapter provides contextual background to the research topic, as well as introduces the reader to the theoretical framework within which the study is anchored.

Chapter Two (Literature Review) presents a synopsis of local and international literature which is relevant to the themes of the study. The chapter outlines the foundations

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upon which psychosocial well-being is based within the rehabilitation milieu of youth offenders, and offers greater insight into the background within which this occurs.

Chapter Three (Methodology) describes the research paradigm and design, and illustrates how the study's aim, research questions and objectives guided the methods used. The chapter likewise reflects a transparent account and reflection of researcher-situatedness and closes with a discussion on ethical considerations related to the study.

Chapter Four (Presentation of Findings) showcases the themes and subthemes which emerged from data collection. These are further illustrated with text excerpts obtained from transcripts of interviews with participants.

Chapter Five (Discussion of Findings) aligns the objectives of the study with the themes derived from data analysis. The chapter integrates the study findings with existing literature and subsequently formulates these according to the study's theoretical framework.

Chapter Six (Conclusion) summarizes the contribution of the study while also considering the study's limitations. The chapter offers applicable recommendations for future research and concludes with a summation of the implications for interventions and policy framework within the offender rehabilitative context.

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1.9. Chapter Summary

Chapter One provided a brief overview of the study by presenting the rationale of the research, highlighting key concepts and offering a detailed description of the theoretical framework guiding the study. The concepts and ideas underpinned in this chapter have been discussed in greater length in subsequent subsections of the mini-thesis. Such discussion commences in the following chapter, Chapter Two, where an extensive review of current literature allows further exploration and understanding of the abovementioned concepts.

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2. CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

2.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter Two contextualizes the research according to current perspectives and knowledge relating to the topics of interest to the study. Findings from local and international literature are presented systematically to further explore salient aspects of mental health and well-being of facilitators of rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders in South Africa. As described in Chapter One: Introduction, the lack of focus on the experiences of community stakeholders within offender rehabilitation calls for a review of the existing literature that offers insight into the greater rehabilitative climate. Given that limited research is available on the subject at hand, experiences within the forensic, rehabilitation and reintegration settings are explored. While not necessarily representative of community stakeholders, this provides a background against which to contextualize possible factors which may influence community stakeholders' experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support. The literature review hones in on the concepts of stress, coping and perceived social support while simultaneously placing these against the psychosocial backdrop within which they occur. The review begins by unpacking the psychological experience associated with working in the rehabilitation of offenders. Thereafter, the chapter contextualizes rehabilitation efforts according to stakeholder participation, rehabilitation climate in South Africa and working with youth offenders. NICRO, the organization of interest to the study, is similarly introduced to the reader.

2.2. Understanding the Psychological Experience of Working Within the Rehabilitation of Offenders

A significant feature of restorative justice is that it makes community involvement a crucial component of offender rehabilitation. The dearth of recent literature on subjective experiences of community stakeholders within this context, however, is misrepresentative of

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– and is also possibly misaligned with – the active roles that they play within rehabilitation processes. Rehabilitation environments offer unique work experiences and challenges that are likely to not be present in other organizations. Hogan et al. (2013) note that individuals within this environment, given the nature of their work, may be exposed to conditions with excessive or unusual demands that have the capacity to generate psychological discomfort and distress. It is then important to understand the totality of this experience to delineate and operationalize stress, coping and perceived social support within the rehabilitative context.

2.2.1. Stress

The term 'stress' is increasingly forming part of global vernacular used in daily conversational exchanges. However, understanding the term psychologically allows an exploration of its sources of origin and provides a greater foundation to recognize its bearing over an individual's well-being. Stress is generally defined as exposure to stimuli that originates in the physical, social or psychological environment which requires the person to adapt or respond (Bhagat et al., 2011). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) further extend on this notion by recognizing that stress is not solely confined to the aforementioned transaction, but which is perceived or experienced by the individual as threatening or posing imminent danger. While the authors propose that an individual may mitigate the effect of the stressor by actively managing it, they likewise suggest that the way an individual appraises and copes with the stressor can influence the effect of stress on their mental and physical health (Amirkhan & Marckwordt, 2017). Numerous mental health difficulties have been associated with stress, including an increased risk of anxiety and depressive symptoms, sleep disturbances and cognitive difficulties such as deficits in attention, memory and decision-making (Amirkhan et al., 2018). When placed within the occupational environment, these difficulties have far-reaching and widespread consequences.

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High levels of stress associated with psychological strain may impact valued work outcomes such as job performance and organizational commitment (Bhagat et al., 2011). Stressors such as role conflict, role ambiguity and dangerousness of the job are a few encountered in the rehabilitation environment (Lambert et al., 2015). Moreover, in a study investigating job stress within the context of correctional services, identified stressors include staff shortages, lack of recognition and physical threat (Botha & Pienaar, 2006). Mathur and Clark (2014) argue that stressors faced by community stakeholders, such as facilitators of rehabilitation programmes, can impact the delivery and effectiveness of such programmes. This is consistent with the view that staff contribute significantly to the success or failure of an institution (Hogan et al., 2013). This alludes to the fact that long-term efficiency and functioning of institutions rely heavily on committed staff. Accordingly, Hogan et al. (2013) emphasize the importance of exploring what the organization means to the staff as opposed to merely understanding what the staff means to the organization. It is thus clear that the psychological health and functioning of staff is dependent on their bond with the organization and influenced by their experiences of their working conditions.

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2.2.2. Coping

A significant contribution of the aforementioned theoretical model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is the recognition of the dynamic interplay between stress and coping, which to a large extent conceptualises coping as central to the overall experience of stress *(that is, how we experience stress is determined by how we perceive to have the resources for coping with the stressor)*. Coping is a continuous process which comprises an individual's efforts to manage a perceived stressor and subsequently reduce the impact of stress on their well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The authors describe coping as mediating an individual's experience of stressful events, while recognizing that this response is both multidimensional and multifunctional (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). While the notion of coping has embodied

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different conceptualizations in global literature, a general consensus exists that coping remains a crucial psychological resource in the preservation of health and well-being (Holton et al., 2016). However, a common differentiation in literature between adaptive and maladaptive coping points to the fact that efforts to adapt or manage a stressor may not always be helpful or effective (Harrison et al., 2021).

Holton et al. (2016) define *adaptive coping* as task-oriented and protective to one's health. In other words, an individual typically assumes an active problem-solving approach to alleviate the impact of a stressor. Adaptive coping may include engagement efforts in activities such as exercise, mindfulness and support-seeking behaviours (Holton et al., 2016). Conversely, *maladaptive coping*, which is considered unfavourable to one's health, is frequently understood as adopting emotion-oriented and/or avoidance-oriented approaches (Holton et al., 2016). This form of coping works to modulate emotion associated with a perceived stressor, and may include avoidance, rumination, self-blame and substance use (Holton et al., 2016).

Of significance, Holton et al. (2016) found that maladaptive coping is associated with greater stress levels, together with poorer physical and mental well-being. This is highlighted in a study investigating emotional burnout and exhaustion among correctional staff. Lambert et al. (2015) noted that experiences of lack of support and reduced sense of personal accomplishment in participants prompted psychological and emotional detachment from the job as a means to cope. Harrison et al. (2021) propose that avoidant coping often results from attempts to alter the significance of a stressor to augment their control over it. This is significant within the sphere of youth offender rehabilitation, given that high job demands with a low sense of control may enhance experiences of stress (Goh et al., 2010). Thus, augmenting a sense of control is likely to increase motivation, skill portrayal and development and satisfaction (Goh et al., 2010). Nonetheless, when done through

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maladaptive coping, this sense of control may have significant negative physical and psychological consequences (Holton et al., 2016).

2.2.3. Perceived Social Support

Perceived social support differs from enacted social support, which accounts for the actual quantity and quality of received social support that is mobilized and given by others (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Rather, perceived social support represents the expectation that support will be provided based on the beliefs that one is cared for, is able to access assistance or aid from others, and is part of a larger interconnected social network (Harandi et al., 2017). A close link has been devised in literature between an individual's perception of the social support available to them and its consequent impact on their mental health. For example, Ioannou et al. (2019) note that an enhanced perceived social support is typically interrelated with positive self-esteem and worth, feelings of safety, a sense of belonging and confidence in one's view of the valuation of oneself by others. Additionally, Siedlecki et al. (2014) found that the general perception of availability of social support has been linked to healthier outcomes in times of stress. A particular emphasis in literature has been placed on the way in which individuals assess the availability, appropriateness and quality of social support available to them, rather than the support actually received, as influencing individual well-being (Ioannou et al., 2019).

Michalopoulos and Aparicio (2012) note that access to social support may enable individuals to maintain appropriate boundaries that result from clear distinctions between their personal and professional lives. This is particularly relevant in occupational settings where such boundaries can become blurred, such as those provisioning aid or assistance to groups of people who are considered vulnerable, such as youth offenders (Knight, 2015). Moreover, the quality of the relationships within which social support ensues is central in shaping emotional and psychological outcomes for community stakeholders. In other words,

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perceived social support serves as a buffer, or protective factor, that mitigates the negative effects of stress on individual well-being. Feeney and Collins (2015) suggest that an individual's social support appraisals offer them with the perception that they are better equipped to cope with, adapt to and resolve in times of adversity. Thus, in an individual's perception of the availability (and their believed access to) supportive relationships, they understand themselves as possessing an enhanced ability to cope adaptively. In this way, perceptions of social support safeguard against the negative impact of stress, as they provide emotional and informational resources that aid in stress management while subsequently diminishing the physiological and psychological consequences typically related to stress.

In the context of community stakeholders, the type of social support – including supervisory support, management support and co-worker support – are some of the factors that shape psychological well-being in the workplace (Lambert et al., 2015). For instance, a lack of perceived social support, whether it be from the institution or the community, may have severe implications on the commitment of community stakeholders to the programmes and may shape the way in which they experience stress and engage in coping strategies within this context (Hogan et al., 2013). A sense of coping competence has thus been linked to feelings of comfort that result from knowing that support systems are available to assist if required (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Lastly, adequate perceptions of available social support have also been linked to interpersonal satisfaction, feelings of social security, increased use of adapting coping strategies and overall well-being (Osman et al., 2014).

2.2.4. Protective and Mitigating Factors

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), experiences of stress are largely informed by processes of primary and secondary appraisal. Moreover, their suggestion of the ongoing process of coping proposes that individuals have the ability to revise their appraisals and consequent coping responses following the reception of new information that may become

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available to them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This alludes to the fact that not all individuals experience significant or equal psychological distress in relation to perceived stressors, and that modes of coping and adjusting vary between individuals. *Psychological strengths*, loosely defined as forming part of characters traits that regulate an individual's capacity to think, feel and behave in particular ways, have been argued to predict optimal functioning in the attainment of goals or pursuit of desirable outcomes (Biswas-Diener et al., 2016). Adaptive use of one's psychological strengths has been linked to enhanced well-being, diminished experiences of stress, greater likelihood of goal achievement and higher life satisfaction (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Likewise, longstanding investigations of psychological strengths in the workplace has led to the general association between strengths-orientated environments with enhanced work performance (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015). The use of personal strengths has been associated with increased vitality, concentration and dedication to work-related tasks (Dubreuil et al., 2014). These have likewise been argued to predict enhanced engagement, lower turnover and higher productivity in the workspace (Biswas-Diener et al., 2016).

In their study with South African non-profit employees, Renard and Snelgar (2016) identify five categories of intrinsic rewards which provide insight into the reasons behind job satisfaction among non-profit employees. These include (i) meaningful work, (ii) flexible work, (iii) challenging work, (iv) varied work and (v) enjoyable work (Renard & Snelgar, 2016). Intrinsic rewards tie into psychological strengths in that they are personal, internal, psychological responses that are based on one's work, effort and abilities (Renard & Snelgar, 2016). Intrinsic rewards offer a platform on which to engage work opportunities to grow personally, take greater responsibility, actively participate in decision-making and enjoy freedom and discretion in one's job (DeCenzo, Robbins & Verhulst, 2016). Intrinsic rewards are particularly important among community stakeholders, given that employees working for

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NPOs in South Africa are paid less than their private sector or government counterparts (Renard & Snelgar, 2016). This infers that *extrinsic rewards*, which are tangible and transactional in nature such as salaries and benefits, do not necessarily play a primary role in the sources of rewards for employees within these settings (Renard & Snelgar, 2016).

Moreover, *resilience* has been coined a significant psychological strength present within staff of non-governmental organizations (Kinman & Grant, 2011). In their study around predictors of stress and resilience in social workers, Kinman and Grant (2011) found that those with emotional and social competencies demonstrated greater resilience. This, in turn, acted as a buffer against the effects of stress. In addition, Kapoulitsas and Corcoran (2015) note the important role that the development of self-esteem plays in contributing to resilience in stakeholders involved with youth offenders. Attention is focused onto the organization's ability to provide employees with opportunities to achieve goals in spaces which are supportive and validating (Kapoulitsas & Corcoran, 2015). Nujjoo and Meyer (2012) note that coupled with resilience, organizational support and greater levels of intrinsic rewarding work promote psychological well-being and competence. Work that places a certain onus of control onto the individual, and which offers skill diversity and flexibility has been linked to proactive performance and innovation in the workspace (Nujjoo & Meyer, 2012). Similarly, Renard and Snelgar (2016) postulate that work that is perceived to be purposeful by employees is associated with reduced stress, work absenteeism and dissatisfaction. Rather, links have been made to happier mental states, organizational commitment, empowerment and fulfilment (Renard & Snelgar, 2016).

2.3. Rehabilitation Contextualized

2.3.1. Rehabilitation Efforts by Non-Governmental Agencies

Globally, states have gradually withdrawn from direct service provision and have called on non-governmental agencies to play active roles in the service and caring of

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offenders (Kaufman, 2015). NGOs and NPOs have become influential actors worldwide and have become expansive in their roles, functions and scope of practice (Tonegawa, 2014). In establishing their position across the international stage, these organizations have attempted to take reign of offender rehabilitation processes, albeit not without difficulty.

In a study on the relation between offender rehabilitation programmes and women's mental health in Kenya, Ondeng (2018) showed that representatives of an NGO working closely with local prisons encountered several challenges in their attempts to enhance the ongoing rehabilitation and reintegration reform agenda in the country. Lack of uniformity and collaboration between stakeholders, as well as blurred policies on rehabilitation of offenders were reported to have complicated the important role they play in supplementing the government's rehabilitation efforts (Ondeng, 2018). Consistently, Maguire's (2016) discussion on the involvement of non-governmental agencies in rehabilitation programmes in the United Kingdom (UK) points to a gradual movement toward competitions for funding. Maguire (2016) argues that the tendency of the private sector to fund such agencies has urged them to become more business-like in regards to their organization and management. The author states that this has increasingly determined the agencies' organizational behaviour and working practices, such as training and sustainability of interventions, which has led to inconsistencies in service provision within the rehabilitation sphere (Maguire, 2016). This may allude to Tonegawa's (2014) findings that workers at NGOs do not always necessarily identify with the organizational objectives of their place of employment. Tonegawa (2014) indicates that this becomes further convoluted by the fact that despite obstacles with cohesion and collaboration, communities often hold expectations of NGOs to provide for them in ways that governments do not.

Kaufman (2015), on the other hand, shares an optimistic perspective on the progressive tendency of policy-makers to transfer responsibility for the provision of care and

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services of offenders to non-governmental agencies. The author notes that "calls to responsibilize community actors" (Kaufman, 2015, p. 16) have moulded the diversity of NGOs in their activities and efforts in offender rehabilitation. In addition, Kaufman (2015) contends that increased involvement of NGOs has enriched global rehabilitation and reintegration practices, given that this has facilitated experiences of citizenship and inclusion among offenders. This is supported by Shippen et al. (2012) who advance that community stakeholder involvement has the potential to buffer against negative outcomes for youth at risk. Similarly, Mutongwizo et al. (2015) maintain that it is important to recognize the merits of diverse stakeholders aiming to address crime prevention and rehabilitation. Although effective partnerships in crime and violence prevention interventions are oftentimes challenging to foster, community stakeholders have paved significant paths that have likely enhanced meaningful outcomes for offenders (Mutongwizo et al., 2015).

2.3.2. Rehabilitation in South Africa

In accordance with Lahlah et al.'s (2013) view that interventions should consider contextual, cultural and socio-economic factors, rehabilitation efforts in South Africa are representative of the complexities associated with context. Herbig and Hesselink (2012) state that although rehabilitation policies in South Africa are a directed and progressive endeavour, they are similarly somewhat aspirational and faced with intrinsic challenges which complicate their prospective achievement. In his study, Gxubane (2018) notes that there is often ambivalence in South Africa around who is responsible for managing the return of youth offenders to their communities. The roles of probation officers, social workers, families and communities in this transition are not well delineated, resulting in reduced efforts by government in ensuring adequate reintegration of youth ex-offenders (Gxubane, 2018). The spotlight is thus shifted onto the already limited and oftentimes overburdened community

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stakeholders, such as local NPOs, to facilitate processes of rehabilitation and reintegration among youth offenders (Mathur & Clark, 2014).

In addition to the loopholes in the system, there are a number of factors that have a significant impact on the support received by those involved in the facilitation of reintegration process. These can in turn place intensive physical, psychological and emotional demands on individuals engaging these processes, including the offenders themselves and facilitators of youth rehabilitation programmes. In their study on a diversion programme facilitated by an NGO in Johannesburg, South Africa, Draper et al. (2013) place a distinct emphasis on the involvement of family members as a pathway of reinforcing the long-lasting impact of the programme on offenders. Many communities, however, are not knowledgeable about such programmes, limiting their immersion in processes that they could otherwise significantly influence (Gxubane, 2018). This is consistent with the observation of Davis et al. (2012) that an enhanced understanding of rehabilitation and reintegration processes enables families and communities to better support these processes for offenders, which subsequently sustains and supports the efforts of programme facilitators. However, a more recent study among ex-offenders from rural areas in the Gauteng province shows that familial and communal knowledge around offender rehabilitation is not always widely available in South Africa. Chikadzi's (2017) study highlights how societal attitudes towards offenders prove a challenge in communal efforts of restorative justice. In this regard, Chikadzi (2017) found that after incarceration, ex-offenders are often rejected and ostracised by their families and community, thus rendering their reintegration to society a challenge. Gxubane (2018) explains that offending behaviour often causes dissension among family structures as well as mistrust from community members, leading to stigma and rejection, which places ex-offenders at risk of recidivism (Chikadzi, 2017). The degree of family and community participation and support thus play a significant role on the impact of rehabilitation

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programmes for the offender, but likewise impact the efforts made by community stakeholders in engaging these processes.

Delobelle (2013) sheds light onto the budding realization around the intricate challenges faced by families in South Africa. With psychosocial factors such as extreme poverty, substance use and crime, the demands on the welfare system continue to grow while resources continue to be limited (Schenk et al., 2017). As crime rates increase, the need for rehabilitation programmes and other forms of intervention rises (Crime Stats SA). As a result, the services of NGOs and social workers have increasingly become highly sought after (Schenk et al., 2017). This comes as responsibilities associated with the restorative justice approach require the provision of aftercare services of youth offenders in addition to on-site intervention. These services are typically offered by a social worker or a social service professional who carefully monitors the progress and development of the offender in their rehabilitation process (Children's Act 38 of 2005). Aftercare services are done with the intention of minimizing recidivism whilst ensuring successful reintegration into the community.

Consistent with international literature, Cupido et al.'s (2005) study revealed a few areas of concern in the implementation of rehabilitation programmes by NPOs in South Africa. These included miscommunication between the courts and community stakeholders, poor attendance by participants of the programmes, differences in language proficiency and educational levels among offenders, time constraints in covering contents of sessions, lack of engagement in aftercare support, unrealistic expectations from parents, failure of implementation of programme contents following its completion, and general fear of offenders and their families of being labelled or stereotyped (Cupido et al., 2005). This means that rehabilitation efforts in South Africa are envisioned to be longstanding, though are

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demanding of resources which often local organizations in South Africa do not have access to (Chikadzi, 2017).

2.3.3. The Institute of NICRO

Founded in September 1910, the *National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders* (NICRO) has become one of the largest NPOs in South Africa (NICROa, n.d.). Arguably the leader in social crime prevention and offender reintegration of adults and children, NICRO is widely recognized across literature for their unremitting contributions to restorative justice in South Africa (Mothibi & Phago, 2018; Ngabonziza & Singh, 2012; Ntuli & Singh, 2019; Singh, 2016). NICRO typically manages (though not limited to) court-referred cases for which rehabilitation and reintegration (non-custodial sentencing as an alternative to incarceration) is the main vehicle. NICRO's services are tailored to break the cycle of crime through the facilitation of diversion programmes which incorporate a range of therapeutic services. These integrate cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) interventions used for distortions in thinking, motivational interviewing and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) aimed at avoiding criminal records and remodelling opportunities at healthy and prosocial lifestyles among offenders (Alli, 2020). For context, the ten most common offenses encapsulated by NICRO's work with youth and adults over the past two-year-period (2021–2022) has included malicious damage to property, contravention of protection order, reckless and negligent driving, driving under the influence (DUI), drug possession, common assault, shoplifting, contravention of Disaster Management Act, assault with intent of Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and theft.

The NPO's triumphs are evident in the far-reaching services that they render from 22 offices and 58 service points located in communities and courts across South Africa (NICRO, 2022). For instance, despite the negative impact on community engagement services brought by the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) regulations, NICRO has made great strides in their

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services rendered to youth between 2021 and 2022. This is evident in the fact that 59% of NICRO's beneficiaries within this period were aged between 18 and 35 years (NICRO, 2022). Accordingly, of particular relevance to the current study is NICRO's *Youth Empowerment Schem*e (YES) programme. The programme targets low risk youth between the ages of 11 and 18, mostly referred from courts and community establishments, who are in conflict with laws and pro-social values (NICROb, n.d.). The YES Programme is guided by a behaviour change approach which combines elements of social learning, social and personal skills training and CBT to develop core skills needed to function effectively in society (NICROb, n.d.). Group sessions are delivered weekly over a period of six to 12 weeks and facilitated by trained NICRO social workers. Aims of the programme include early intervention and prevention of re-offending, shaping young people who are socially and emotionally competent, building value systems that support adaptive psychological adjustment, well-being and mental health, as well as encourage parental responsibility (NICROb, n.d.). This is followed by aftercare planning where the facilitators of the programme plot ways with the youth in which to sustain learnings that resulted from the interventions, or explore further required support avenues (NICROc, n.d.). Aftercare tracking is then implemented, where facilitators are expected to follow-up on the progress of the youth intermittently at three, six and twelve months (NICROc, n.d.).

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2.3.4. Working with Youth Offenders

International literature distinguishes between severity of offenses pertaining to levels of violence and implications, and suggests that like adults, youth participate in unlawful behaviour ranging from truancy and underage substance use to more serious offenses such as property crimes, violent crimes and sexual offenses (Lai et al., 2016). In South Africa, offenses are classified according to Schedules. Each numbered categorization indicates severity of the unlawful behaviour, typically ranging from minor to serious offenses

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(Criminal Procedure Act No 51 of 1977). In their study examining the differences in the profile of risk and rehabilitation needs of youth who have offended according to varying levels of violence, Lai et al. (2016) explain that enhancing success rates of interventions requires them to match the level of risk of the offender. Furthermore, intervention should be tailored according to the offender's learning style, motivation and ability for responsivity (Baglivio et al., 2014). Importantly, interventions should also work in parallel to the definitions of criminal behaviour that are typically shaped by a community's cultural norms, morals, religion and expectations (Lahlah et al., 2013). This is consistent with Brookman's (2015) view that offending behaviour results from complex narratives that fuse cultural, psychosocial and historically-informed elements.

While reviewing the context of work in youth offending, it is imperative to unpack what the early stages of life, defined as 'youth', look like in rehabilitation efforts. While there is no universal agreement around the definition of the youth age group, the United Nations (2022) categorizes persons aged between 15 and 24 years as comprising the 'youth' group. However, the South African National Youth Policy extends on this definition and delineates the youth profile as constituting those aged between 14 and 35 years (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020).

Adolescence in particular represents a unique stage of development in which rapidly changing emotional, behavioural and cognitive components mark the transition from childhood to adulthood (Rapee et al., 2019). In a life stage that feels volatile and experimental, DeLisi et al. (2011) report that youth in conflict with the law have been shown to exhibit misconduct, especially when found in correctional or rehabilitative environments. In this regard, Lee et al. (2017) also note that the oppositional and often hostile stance of youth within these settings challenges the resources and efforts undertaken by those attempting to facilitate their rehabilitation. As explained by the authors, a defiant demeanour

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is incongruent with the demands of rehabilitation programmes and often hinders these processes (Lee et al., 2017). As a consequence, a recurring concern in literature is whether the ideal of individualized treatment for youth offenders in aim of rehabilitation can coexist with realistic and sustainable efforts in which to do so (Lee et al., 2017).

Knight (2015) affirms that individuals working in forensics, corrections and rehabilitation settings are likely to serve populations with a background history of trauma or adversity. Beyond behaviours that challenge, youth offending is largely environmentally-informed. Contextual risk and maintaining factors for youth offending include, though not limited to, poor familial attachments, childhood adversity, insufficient household income, low school attainment, family forensic history, poor frustration tolerance, substance use and peer influence (Cuervo & Villanueva, 2015). These factors, compounded by court-mandated orders to attend rehabilitation programmes, can result in heightened feelings of mistrust and hostility towards facilitators (Knight, 2015). This means that trauma and adversity not only influence offending behaviour, but likewise shape the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of rehabilitation engagement (Farrington, 2016).

Notably, importance is placed in literature in recognizing vicarious trauma and countertransference in facilitators working with offenders (Knight, 2015). *Vicarious trauma* is defined as an inner experience that results from empathic engagement with another's trauma material, and can especially develop in settings where extensive trauma may be present, such as youth correctional or rehabilitative services (Rauvola et al., 2019). Accordingly, Knight (2015) notes that workers in these settings, despite their empathic engagements with offenders, often feel ill-equipped to provide meaningful assistance based on untrue assumptions that they lack the required knowledge and expertise to do so. Knight (2015) highlights how *'countertransference'*, which is understood to be the worker's unconscious emotional responses to the offender, comes into play as a result.

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Countertransference in these settings typically ranges from avoidance to over-identification as well as 'rescuing' attitudes and behaviours toward offenders (Knight, 2015). These unconscious processes then evoke the facilitator's own doubts about their sense of power or self-efficacy in the job (Knight, 2015). Likewise, these processes carry significant meaning in the work of the facilitators, given that expressions of self-efficacy ultimately reflect the beliefs of the facilitator themselves (Danneris & Dall, 2017). If such beliefs are negative or maladaptive, an impact of similar nature on the mental health of the facilitators is likely to ensue (Danneris & Dall, 2017).

Additionally, the emotionally draining nature of their work can lead to experiences of heightened distress or burnout alike (Carrola et al., 2016). In attempts to understand forensic social work, Sheehan (2012) found that social workers perceived the complex needs and vulnerability of their clients as requiring extensive knowledge on individual functioning, as well as efficiency in navigating various legal services. These were often seen as highly demanding and at times unattainable (Sheehan, 2012). Exchanges between youth offenders and facilitators, as well as the subsequent internal and psychological processes involved therein, are thus significant in influencing experiences of stress and coping among facilitators.

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2.4. Chapter Summary

Chapter Two unveiled the conglomeration of numerous local and international insights around rehabilitative processes of youth offenders, as well as varied psychological concepts associated with these. A specific focus was placed on the experience of facilitators of such processes, in which the notions of stress, coping and perceived social support featured. This chapter also provided context to rehabilitation settings, as well as NICRO's YES programme, which aimed at creating greater insight into the work that the participants of the current study undertake. The following chapter, Chapter Three, closely illustrates how

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the study's research paradigm and methodology were guided by the literature described above, as well as by the relevant research aims and objectives of the study.

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3. CHAPTER THREE: Research Methodology

3.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter Three begins by explaining the research design as captured within the aims and focal points of the study. Thereafter, a detailed description of the methodology used, including sampling and sampling strategy, participants, data collection and data analysis is provided. The latter part of the chapter offers extensive consideration relating to the trustworthiness of the data as well as a reflexive account of researcher-situatedness within the study. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations related to the study.

3.2. Research Method and Design

The study was conducted within a qualitative methodological framework. Unlike other methodological approaches, qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons, attitudes and behaviours behind human behaviour. This typically involves learning about how participants attach certain meanings to phenomena or events (Rosenthal, 2016). This method allows for the research to delve into the subjective experiences of the phenomenon being studied and is particularly appropriate for topics that are under-researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to meet the current research objectives, the study intended to generate knowledge grounded in human experience while focusing on meaning in context. A qualitative approach was thus suited to the study given that the overall purpose was to understand how people interpret their experiences and to delineate the process (rather than the outcome) of meaning-making attributed to such experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The study followed an exploratory research design, which generally has as an objective to explore an area of which little is known about (Kumar, 2018). With an emphasis on unveiling accurate and meaningful descriptions of participants' experiences or insights, this design was suitable for the study. An exploratory design was particularly applicable,

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given the limited existing literature on the experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support among community stakeholders working within the context of rehabilitation of youth offenders.

3.3. Sampling and sampling strategy

Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to recruit participants in the study. Purposive sampling focuses on selecting individuals specifically because they possess the characteristics, knowledge or experience related to the phenomenon under investigation (Babbie, 2016). Thus, this sampling approach is appropriate in identifying and selecting information-rich cases related to the area of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Sampling was intended to ensue between NICRO and Khulisa branches across South Africa. These organizations were identified as appropriate research sites for the study as they form part of the very limited youth offender rehabilitation services offered in South Africa (Gxubane, 2018). Nevertheless, Khulisa was not reachable and thus unable to participate in the study. NICRO's Eastern and Western Cape divisions were likewise unable to participate due to not rendering youth services relevant to the study at the time of data collection. Upon referral to other divisions in the remaining provinces around South Africa, NICRO KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), North West and Limpopo expressed interest in participating in the study. Figure 2 highlights these regions within South Africa. In liaison with the area managers of each province, NICRO's YES programme (which was explored in Chapter Two: Literature Review), was identified as suitable to the study. The area managers subsequently identified and recruited facilitators of this programme who met criteria for the study. Facilitators thus represented a homogenous sample.

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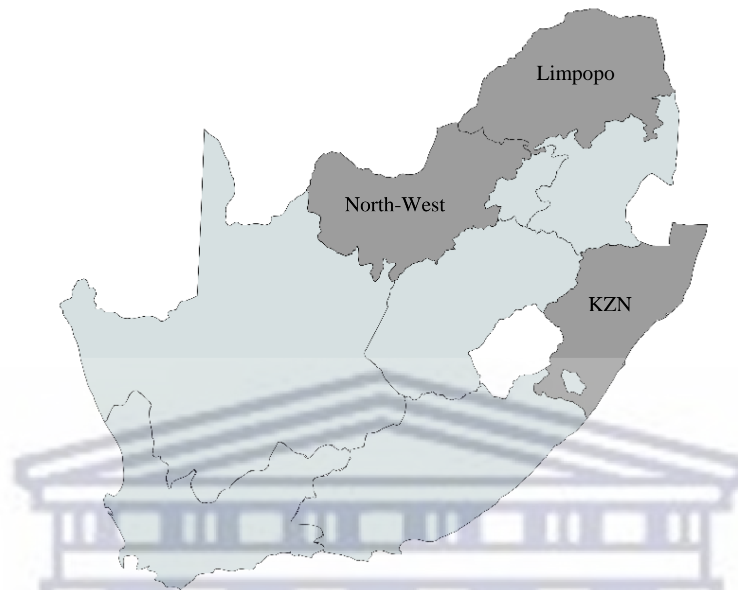
Figure 2

Participating NICRO Offices by Province



3.4. Participants

After identified by the area managers, nine facilitators working within various suburbs in KZN, North West and Limpopo were invited to participate in the study. According to Terre Blanche et al. (2011), this size is satisfactory given that the sample was made up of a homogenous set of participants. Specifically, the target sample was based on a limited population of prospective participants who met inclusion criteria for the study. Moreover, as the purpose of the study was to make initial inquiries into the lives of participants within the particular context of youth offender rehabilitation, a small sample size provided sufficient information for adequate analyses to be performed. Consequently, the sample size satisfies recommended guidelines around the principle of data saturation. Data saturation occurs when a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon is achieved following responses from participants that no longer yield new substantive information in relation to the questions posed (Guest et al., 2020). This was supplemented by the restricted availability of participants in an already limited target research population.

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The research sample consisted of staff involved in the management and facilitation of at least one YES programme intervention at NICRO. All facilitators were full-time social workers employed by NICRO. Inclusion criteria did not require that participants be actively involved in this intervention at the time of data collection, and thus also encompassed participants who had facilitated the intervention prior to the study. Participants ranged between the ages of 25 and 50 years and were proficient in English and/or isiZulu. Four participants identified as male, while five identified as female, and ranged in their work experience in the field (three to 13 years). Additional particulars and participant demographics, such as naming the NICRO regional offices where participants were based, were purposely omitted in view of preserving participant anonymity. This was due to the fact that some participants were the only facilitators of youth rehabilitation programmes in their workplace.

3.5. Data Collection and Procedure

Data collection commenced once ethics clearance from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at the University of the Western Cape (Appendix A) and institutional permission from NICRO (Appendix B) were obtained. Thereafter, at the directive and request of the researcher (and as part of the identification and recruitment of participants for the study), NICRO's respective provincial area managers briefly explained the study process and objectives to the identified prospective participants who were requested to give permission to the managers for providing the researcher with their contact details. The researcher made telephonic contact with each of the participants who granted this permission, whereby the aim, purpose and nature of the research were described. During this communication, participants were afforded an opportunity to clarify questions or doubts pertaining to the study. Participants were likewise informed of their rights during the research process and indicated their preferred language for the interview.

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Contingency plans were also made for having a suitably trained research assistant (who worked closely with the researcher to map out the intricacies and nuances of the interviews, in order to be able to identify and follow-up on questions that needed further exploration). Verbal consent was obtained from participants who requested to be interviewed in a language other than English to provide their details to the research assistant of the study. As is shown below, two of the nine participants in the study required the use of the isiZulu translation during the interviews. The initial contact facilitated the building of rapport with participants before the interviews, in efforts to establish further trust and comfortability during the data collection stage (McGrath et al., 2019). The details of these calls, including date, time, content discussed and participant responses were carefully logged. Following their verbal informed consent, and prior to the interview, copies of the information sheet (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D) were emailed to participants in their preferred language of English, Afrikaans, isiZulu or isiXhosa. This was done in light of further outlining the details of the study and obtaining permission to use the information shared during data collection for purposes of the research respectively. All documents requiring translation, including the interview schedule, information sheet and consent form were processed by bilingual individuals who translated each to the relevant target languages. Participants were asked to sign the consent form, either physically or electronically, and email it to the researcher as a means of obtaining written consent. Interviews were subsequently scheduled at a time that was convenient for the participant, and which did not interfere with their work duties.

At the time of proposing and conceptualizing the study, as well as during data collection, South Africa was under a National State of Disaster due to the Covid-19 pandemic (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). This, coupled with the fact that the research was conducted inter-provincially, meant that data was collected through individual, semi-

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structured telephonic interviews. This was deemed the most appropriate data collection platform under the circumstances of the research, given that internet connectivity and online video platforms were not accessible to participants. The telephonic interview ensued at the full cost of the researcher and proved to be a reliable and efficient platform for data collection.

Interviews were guided by an interview schedule (Appendix E) and were approximately 40-60 minutes in length. Seven interviews were conducted by the researcher in English following participants' own indication of fluency in the language. Given that provision was made for interviews to also be conducted in Afrikaans, isiXhosa or isiZulu, two interviews were conducted by a research assistant in isiZulu as per the participants' request. Qualitative interviews are appropriate in the context of the study as they encourage an understanding of the interviewee's point of view and provide insight into how participants frame and understand their personal experiences (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, the specific use of semi-structured interviews was deemed an appropriate fit for the community-based context within which the study ensued. With a focus on the participants' experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support in the YES programme, the open-ended questions on the interview schedule were rooted in existing literature and guided by the study's research questions, aims and objectives. This permitted for conversational flow that was flexible, which further allowed the researcher to probe and ask follow-up questions stemming from participants' responses (Plano Clark & Cresswell, 2015). Thus, in replicating the conversational reality of the human world, this tool provided the researcher with an active participating role in the interview process, as opposed to hiding behind a pre-set interview guide (Brinkmann, 2014). In using a conversational style to develop rapport while directing the interview towards questions that explore the participants' experiences and perceptions, a key objective of the study, participants were encouraged to express their views in ways that

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were unhindered by potential expectations or perspectives of the researcher or other findings (Plano Clark & Cresswell, 2015). The comfortability of the conversation may have then challenged apprehensions by participants regarding the power dynamics of the interviewer-interviewee relationship, defied the notion of the researcher as the expert and consequently reinforced the processes of trust and rapport building. Lastly, the flexibility, safety, convenience and time- and cost-saving of these interviews may have likewise proved as motivators for individuals to participate in the study (Bryman, 2016).

Interviews were audio-recorded, translated into English when necessary, transcribed verbatim and stored on a password-protected computer. The research assistant who conducted the isiZulu interviews transcribed and translated these into English. Within this process, the research assistant continuously cross-referenced their field notes from each interview in attempts to produce translated text that is as similar as possible to the text of origin (Al-Amer et al., 2015). The research assistant likewise consulted regularly with the researcher to circumvent the risk of personal interpretations and to ensure congruence between the source and target languages without changing the meaning (Al-Amer et al., 2015). This acted as an advantage, given that the research assistant was familiar with the culture, language and context of the interview. Moreover, this choice of translation maximized the inclusions of idiomatic expressions, as well as textual, content and semantic equivalence in the target language (Blanch & Aluja, 2016). During each interview, the researcher and research assistant made brief reflective notes that later informed data analysis and apprised the findings of the study.

3.6. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from the study. By describing data in rich detail, thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns, also known as themes, within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As described

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above, tentative analysis commenced during data collection, where the researcher used reflective notes during the interview to identify and consider prominent patterns in participants' narratives (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thereafter, the six phases of data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. Firstly, the *familiarization with the data* collected was aided by the transcription of the interviews. This was supplemented with reading each transcript, making notes as well as consulting field notes containing personal thoughts and observations. Doing so assisted in developing a sense of the entirety of the data as well as allowed for additional reflections on the data both as a comprehensive whole and in individual parts (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). The second step entailed the *identification and collation of codes*, which are labels or tags assigned to segments of narrative to identify and/or describe selected features of the data, such as participants' feelings and perspectives, or recurring significant words or phrases. This was followed by the third step, where the *identification of data similarities* allowed the categorization of codes into themes and sub-themes. Codes shifted based on the investigation of themes and different elements found in the data. Fourthly, the identified *themes were reviewed* to determine whether each was a true reflection of the raw data. The various processes of reviewing, reconnecting, collapsing and defining each theme mostly encompassed this step of the analysis. The fifth step entailed the *naming and defining of themes* based on the core information that they represented. Careful attention was given to ensure that each theme was grounded in data and context as well as to review their relation and alignment to the study's research questions. Lastly, the sixth step consisted of *arranging the themes into a coherent and valid account of the study's findings*, where extracts were used to explain and interpret each theme. This method proved useful in examining the perspectives of different research participants, differentiating between experiences and generating unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, this approach was appropriate in

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contextualizing the participants’ experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support within the framework of youth offender rehabilitation.

3.7. Trustworthiness of the Data

Qualitative studies differ from the quantitative paradigm as they produce linguistic rather than numerical data and employ meaning-based forms of analysis rather than statistical. This implies that conventional standards of reliability and validity associated with quantitative works are elusive. Instead, a focus is placed on ensuring that findings are trustworthy through sound research practices and rigorous analyses of the data. In determining the trustworthiness of the study, the conventions of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are noteworthy. *Credibility* refers to the manner in which the views of the participants and the researcher’s representation of them are integrated (Nowell et al., 2017). Some ways of establishing the credibility of findings include prolonged engagement, data collection triangulation, research triangulation and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility in this study was achieved by engaging in continuous peer review and debriefing. During data collection, this was achieved through reviewing participant responses during and after interviews to determine that the researcher understood the authentic articulation of participants’ experiences. This safeguarded study findings that were a true reflection of the participants’ responses, rather than that of the researcher’s own biases and preconceptions. This was supplemented through extensive efforts of maximizing cultural competence within the translation of the isiZulu interviews, which directly impacts the trustworthiness of a study (Al-Amer et al., 2015). Given that language differences can pose great obstacles in cross-language research, it was important to ensure that the intended meaning of the participants’ words in one language were accurately conveyed in another. Credibility was further achieved through triangulation, which describes the converging of findings of different resources as

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significantly reducing or removing intrinsic bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). In this study, an extensive literature review was conducted on the research topic on local and international spheres. Presenting these findings, as is outlined in Chapter Two: Literature Review, gifts the reader with an opportunity to consider the extent to which these corroborate the current study's thematic representations (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Moreover, as an additional credibility-enhancing strategy, as well as ensure the veracity of the research findings, the research supervisors of the study reviewed the data analysis to ensure that the methods employed were sound (Orr et al., 2021).

Furthermore, qualitative findings are often oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the social world being studied, at times limiting their applicability to other settings (Bryman, 2016). Thus, consideration of how the findings generated from the context-specific nature of the study may have relevance in other contexts was vital. As a means to achieve *transferability*, the researcher produced in-depth descriptions of the socio-economic and political environments as well as the impact and social meaning of contextual factors within the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This responsibility was undertaken with aim to provide those who seek to transfer findings to other milieu with grounds on which to judge possible transferability (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable and well-documented warrants dependability (Nowell et al., 2017). *Dependability* refers to the extent to which findings remain consistent over similar conditions, and thus able to be replicated by other researchers (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). This was achieved through researcher reflexivity, peer debriefing and the provision of a comprehensive description of the research process.

Lastly, *confirmability*, which ensures that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, is established when credibility, transferability, and

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dependability are all achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher demonstrated how the study's findings, interpretations and conclusions are grounded in data through clear documentation of the research process (Nowell et al., 2017). Provision of segments of raw material in the form of interview transcript excerpts, as integrated in Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings, expanded on the transparency of findings throughout the study.

3.8. Reflexivity

Reflexive practice is a pertinent component in qualitative research that promotes rigour, quality and credibility of findings (Darawsheh, 2014). Reflexivity entails an incessant process of self-reflection by the researcher to produce awareness about their actions, feelings and perceptions throughout the research process (Dodgson, 2019). This is particularly important in encouraging the researcher to continuously examine the possible influence of their own beliefs, thoughts and perspectives on data collection and interpretation (Babbie, 2013). Moreover, given that the researcher is also a functioning constituent in the environment within which the research is conducted, to uncover and contextualize potential personal biases, preconceived notions and subjective interpretations of the research data is to give reflexivity its hallmark (Attia & Edge, 2017).

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South Africa's historical background lends way to the diversity in language, culture and experiences evident throughout communities in the country. As a consequence, prejudice and inequality remain a pervasive and deeply rooted reality in South Africa where unique socioeconomic and structural obstacles are faced by many of varying ethnicities and socioeconomic status. As a white female in my mid-twenties and coming from a privileged socioeconomic background, these implicit differences were clear throughout the study. Of note, it was common that participants assumed my unfamiliarity with particular customary practices or sociocultural contexts, often making way for explaining or justifying these for what I infer to be their way of imparting the power of context in their narratives. Inversely, I

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often responded to this by assuring participants of my awareness and insight into these, perhaps as my own efforts at overcompensating for the 'outsider status' that I felt I embodied. Experiencing a countertransference that was often of an affirming or validating nature was likely my own attempt to show the participants that while not being able to fully equate my experiences to theirs, I appreciated what they were sharing with me based on my own exposure to community-led interventions in settings similar to those worked in by participants. This added complexity to the research process, as I was cognizant particularly of the legacy of oppression and discrimination that South Africa carries. It was clear that my position as a researcher, a training professional, and individual created an amalgam of contextual, theoretical and experiential positionality that could patently steer way to subjective bias. Mindful of the risk of replicating power dynamics that perpetuated inequality, I found myself feeling a deep sense of responsibility to enquire, clarify and admit when I was unacquainted with any perception that participants shared during interviews. Similarly, as an extension of such responsibility, I consulted with senior members of NICRO when requiring additional information on any elements that impacted my interpretation of the research findings, such as organizational processes and staff support. This opened doors for rapport building which eventually allowed participants to seemingly engage with comfort, enthusiasm and authenticity. Furthermore, engaging in extensive notetaking throughout data collection, as well as seeking my own supervisory support allowed for the exploration of personal bias and blind spots. This ultimately indorsed careful challenging and accountability of any inclinations of mine toward partiality (Probst, 2015). This was complemented by my own commitment and adherence to ethical guidelines and methodology rigor to ensure validity of the study.

My interest in forensic and rehabilitation settings inspired this research. As a training clinical psychologist, I find myself captivated by the predisposing, precipitating and

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perpetuating factors contributing to youth offending and the possible psychopathology that may ensue. My interests were bolstered through the accounts of participants, who were eager to ponder on the contributions of socioeconomic inequality, family dynamics, peer influence, exposure to violence and substances as well as systemic issues to the need for the work that they do. In Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings, I show how participants tend to use defences, such as suppression, to protect themselves from possible uncomfortable or painful experiences. Being invested in a topic that lies very much within the participants' purview, I remained mindful of not wavering with participants' in fully accessing the emotion attached to their narratives (and thus perpetuating or giving way for re-enactment of these defence mechanisms in interviews) in light of pursuing personal and professional interests rather than those of the current research. Instead, I systematically utilized a theoretical framework (please see Chapter One: Introduction for more) to present findings in endeavours to formulate these in ways that are helpful and representative of those being studied, and which is achieved in congruence with the research questions.

Inherent in psychological research is the need to make psychological interpretations. While it seems befitting to understand the full depth and breadth of the research findings being presented, I was similarly cautious of not undertaking the role of psychologist (and thus of expert) in interviews, as well as formulating and conveying participants' accounts. To mitigate this risk, I relied on my clinical skills to consistently attempt to understand how the parallel processes of my inner world, together with those of the participants, swayed with one another to influence the greater research process. I experienced a significant push and pull between sifting through information that was relevant to the study topic. While not wanting to do participants the 'injustice' of excluding information that they so willingly shared with me, I was likewise mindful of the underlying interpersonal dynamics occurring in interviews. Potentially indicative of the participants' search for validation and recognition (as is

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discussed in Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings), participants often showcased their work to me in ways that deviated from the research questions. The systemic challenges and personal impact described in their stories evoked a number of emotions within me, including disbelief, frustration, anger and at times guilt. In turn, my countertransference, a protective and advocacy response toward participants, is likely to have resulted from (and represent a defence against) my own feelings of helplessness. My clinical training thus stood me in good stead, as it allowed a gentle nudge in challenging participants to think of their experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support with greater insight, while simultaneously encouraging my own reflective processes throughout the study.

In wanting to accurately and objectively represent the voice of the participants in a field of study that remains under-researched, the resilience and resourcefulness demonstrated by the participants left me feeling humbled. I related to participants and understood the psychological impact of working in a space with high demands and low resources, given that I too put this research on hold to fully commit to a taxing year of Clinical Psychology internship at a local government institution. My decision to halt the process of writing up the dissertation following data collection speaks to a commitment to preserve the authenticity of and need for the study. Choosing to rather engage with the research findings after internship, rather than during, in the absence of diversions in an intensive year of clinical training, allowed opportunities and space to engage more meaningfully, authentically and reflexively with these. This timeframe was further supplemented by greater experience of working with diverse populations of South Africa in which the notions of mindfulness and self-awareness were equally important. This expanded on the nature of personal reflection that ensued, while also allowed me to capitalize on critical thinking and clinical skills that may have been less developed before the time of write-up of the dissertation.

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Although an awareness and sensitivity to cultural, political and social contexts proved challenging given the telephonic means of data collection within the study, efforts to articulate, engage and accurately represent the significance of these contexts on the findings of this research is made throughout the paper. This is complemented by a presentation of limitations of this study in Chapter Six: Conclusion to ensure research practice that is fair, ethical and transparent.

3.9. Ethics considerations

Ethics clearance was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC; Reference number: HS21/5/55) of the University of the Western Cape. Moreover, institutional permission was obtained from NICRO alongside informed consent from all participants, which included agreement to record the interviews. Participant information was obtained with their permission, and was preserved following the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act (Staunton et al., 2020). Participants were provided with a digital copy of the information sheet in their preferred language of English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa or isiZulu, which outlined the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the researcher and participants respectively. Participants were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and were reminded of their right to decline participation as well as withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences for them. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

A bilingual research assistant with proficiency in English and isiZulu, and with prior interview experience as well as a basic background in Psychology, received in-depth first-hand training by the researcher to conduct, transcribe and translate interviews conducted in isiZulu. A confidentiality binding form (Appendix F) was signed, and comprehensive training around the nature and purpose of the study, as well the research objectives, ethical

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practice and psychological concepts at hand ensued. The transcript of a full interview already conducted by the researcher, together with field notes and prompts deemed relevant by the researcher were reviewed in collaboration with the research assistant to further supplement their training and aptness. All costs were accounted for by the researcher, including the necessary telephonic resources required by the research assistant to aid with the collection of data.

All participant information obtained during the interviews remained confidential, and (to adhere to the ethical principle of anonymity) personal identifiers were removed in the reporting of the findings. This proved especially important, given the small number of NICRO facilitators of the rehabilitation programmes in each province as discussed above. Anonymity thus served to preserve personal information which could have otherwise been easily presumed in the identification of participants. Only the researcher, research assistant and supervisors of the study had access to the research data, which was stored securely using passwords. After a period of five years, the electronic data will be deleted and hard copies of interview transcripts will be shredded. Given the potential threat of emotional discomfort or negative emotions while participating in the study, all participants were debriefed and provided with referral information to LifeLine for free telephonic counselling services. This was done to mitigate overall risk and do no harm. None of the participants expressed distress as a result of the research, nor requested any further intervention following the interviews.

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3.10. Chapter Summary

Chapter Three provided a detailed step-by-step description of the methodology employed in the study. An account of the research design, sampling and sampling strategy, description of participants, data collection and data analysis was presented. Moreover, the latter part of the chapter comprised discussions around the trustworthiness of the data, researcher reflexivity and ethical considerations related to the study. These accounts are

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rekindled into the subsequent chapter, Chapter Four, which discusses the findings which resulted from the aforementioned data collection procedures.

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4. CHAPTER FOUR: Presentation of Findings

4.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter Four introduces the study findings in the form of themes and subthemes which were derived from the reported experiences of community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders. A summary of participants' demographic information from which such themes were derived is presented in Table 1. The presentation of these findings, which speak predominantly to the concepts of stress, coping and perceived social support, is accompanied by text excerpts obtained from verbatim transcripts of interviews with participants. It is worth highlighting that, for each excerpt used, certain demographic information about the participants (such as participant number, age, sex, and years of experience working in the rehabilitation) is indicated to make the excerpts more 'personalised'. A summary of the four main themes, and subsequent 16 subthemes resulting from the thematic analysis are summarized below in Table 2 and discussed in later sections.

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Information of Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Interview Language	Years of Experience
1	25	Male	English	7
2	26	Male	English	3
3	30	Female	English	3
4	27	Male	English	5
5	40	Male	isiZulu	6
6	32	Female	isiZulu	6
7	50	Female	English	8
8	44	Female	English	13
9	38	Female	English	11

Note. *Ages and years of experience represent those at the time of the interview.*

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Table 2

Themes and Subthemes Derived from Thematic Analysis

Themes	Subthemes
4.2.1. Sources of Stress and Challenge	4.2.1.1. Contextual Factors
	4.2.1.2. Barriers to Impact Change
	4.2.1.3. Unrelenting Demands ('Jack of All Trades')
	4.2.1.4. 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Child'
4.2.2. Coping Strategies for Stress and Emotional Discomfort	4.2.2.1. Harnessing Knowledge and Skills
	4.2.2.2. Emotional Suppression
	4.2.2.3. Acceptance
	4.2.2.4. Seeking Shared Experiences in the Workplace
	4.2.2.5. Spiritual and Recreational Activities
4.2.3. Perceived Availability of Social Support	4.2.3.1. Colleague and Supervisory Support
	4.2.3.2. Organizational Support
	4.2.3.3. Other Stakeholders and External Agencies
	4.2.3.4. Familial and Partner Support
4.2.4. Identity Beyond the Self	4.2.4.1. Sense of Self in Relation to Others
	4.2.4.2. Competent and Effective Self
	4.2.4.3. Professional Identity

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4.2. Presentation of Findings

4.2.1. Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge

Almost half of the participant sample presented with an initial reluctance to identify obstacles or difficulties encountered in managing and facilitating rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders. Four out of the nine participants either affirmed that any troubles they came across lacked the necessary severity and influence to cause disturbance, or alternatively, dismissed the idea of facing any challenges altogether.

> *"There are not much challenges or incidents that can break my peace, you know?"* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

> *"No, there is no challenge that I have faced."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Sometimes, the resistance to identify challenges was accompanied by a discussion, and possible normalization, of the hurdles that complement this line of work. The fact that challenges may have been normalized by participants is pertinent, as this may stem from not wanting to confront certain fears or realities associated with expressing grievances about their work. This is exemplified in the excerpts below.

> *"No, there's no complaints on that one. As a social worker also, you must develop different things. Every month you must wait and try to improve yourself in some of the things that you feel that you are not good at. So we are not struggling a lot."* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

> *"No, we… We don't have challenges. You get used to it."* (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

Nonetheless, with some prompting, all participants, including those mentioned above, identified a number of challenges falling within the confines of context, working environment and nature of their work. Four areas of challenge were thus identified and discussed below,

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including (i) Contextual Factors; (ii) Barriers to Impact Change; (iii) Unrelenting Demands ('Jack of All Trades'); and (iv) It Takes a Village to Raise a Child.

4.2.1.1. Contextual Factors

Participants unanimously raised the common difficult realities associated with navigating the NPO landscape. In the discussion of other themes presented in these findings (Theme 2: Coping Strategies for Stress and Emotional Discomfort and Theme 4: Identity Beyond the Self), participants explored how they find fulfilment in making a difference in their communities and contributing to causes that they are passionate about. Nonetheless, this is not done without trials and tribulations. The context of service provision, such as financial constraints and limited access to resources, was present in most narratives of participants in describing the challenges they face. Such contextual factors are described below.

Financial Constraints

A few participants vulnerably reported financial difficulties resulting from reportedly low wages. Still, they showed empathy and understanding around the circumstances for this, and placed into perspective the context of working at an NPO.

> *"Hey, but that one is kind of deep. Most of the time we are always complaining about the wages. Ja, complaining about the wages."* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

> *"This is an NGO. We're not getting much, you know, financially to feed our family."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

> *"Financial wise, uh, we, we're struggling. [...] And then I won't blame the organization that I'm working for because I know the organization that I'm working for… It's big. It's big. But again, it's small when it comes to resources, you know?"* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Most participants also considered how limited funding impacts the ability to provide adequate and sufficient services. One participant expressed concern over having to use

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personal resources to perform tasks at work, under already financially-constrained conditions. This was consistent with the data collection process, where participants often reported not having immediate access to computers, internet or printers due to them *"not working or always out of order"*.

> *"Limited funds do really affect us negatively when it comes to children doing the wrong things. […] It's bad with no funds."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

> *"It becomes stressful, it becomes stressful. […] You have to use your airtime, use your data to contact them. Even though they promise us 'no, you will receive your airtime, one day' but there's no 'one day'. […] But they said they're working out on it but still now, nothing. […] So I think it's actually affects, it puts pressure but we are managing all the time to actually lessen the pressure. […] Only if they've given us the resources to actually do our work. Then we'll be fine, not taking something out our pocket that we have worked for."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Limited Access to Resources

Besides capital, participants also reported access to resources as a widespread challenge in their day-to-day. This was generally described as *"limiting"* and *"stressful"*. In reflecting on the resources needed to facilitate rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders, participants spoke to access to venues and group facilitation materials.

> *"My challenges so far, it's not on the content but it's the environment that we conduct the… The programmes in. […] It's sometimes the venue, the heat, the resources sometimes, you know, the physical… NICRO as an NGO sometimes cannot afford to have charts and the workshops… The workbooks, sorry. But besides… The content, it's proper. But now the thing is, hey, the resources."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

> *"I have to check for the venue, whether they will be available and stuff. So that's stressing, but I hope it will be fine. […] But because of the resources, insufficient*

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resources that we have at NICRO, ja, I think they also limit us somehow, somewhere, yeah." (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Furthermore, participants raised their own frustrations around access to safe and properly functioning vehicles when required to travel for long periods or distances to their places of work.

> *"Also, the cars that we use to travel from one place to another… You find out that they don't have… They're not in good condition. […] Ja, so if issues like that would be addressed in a good manner, we will work without stress."* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

> *"A lot of the places we work at are remote and far and not easily accessible to the different parts of that community. So it is far and requires traveling, so what affects us the most is that we cannot be near the youth that we work with."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

> *"Yes there has to be challenges, especially since we work in remote areas and the challenge is normally getting to that place. Because we do not have cars, and you find that during that time there is no transport going there. So we have to work in accordance to transport times. If there was easier transport access to those areas, everything would be much better. […] There is hardly any assistance given because they [NICRO] are also under pressure and there are limited cars so it's difficult for us to share. You also find that they also need the vehicle so that they can do their work.* (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

Not only were these issues practical, they likewise bared psychological impact, where among a few, exhaustion and distress were cited.

> *"Well, there will always be stress because where I work is in two remote areas and it's stressful because it is more than 150km apart. So, you find that you have to drive an hour and half to two hours to get to the next location and that the road to get there is also not smooth. So, it is frustrating because by the time you get there you are already exhausted and all of that disturbs you psychologically. […] So, I would say those are the difficulties. It's transport more than anything."* (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

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Hopeful, one participant reflected on the prospective successes that would be accomplished with full and appropriate access to the necessary resources. He then contrasted how prospective programme outcomes could differ from what he perceives to be able to achieve as a facilitator currently.

> *"Mm, I mean the success rates would be remarkable. […] So with the right resources, ja, we can achieve that. But now you find that some people are irritated, some they say this is a waste of time, maybe you'll be able to change like five, four people, you know, in a group which is still a success but you know that with the right resources you would have done more."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

4.2.1.2. Barriers to Impact Change

Participants noted that rehabilitative work with youth is unique in its nature and challenges. Some reported that this differed significantly from work with adult clients seeking rehabilitative support. In turn, this ignited differing responses in participants around how they understood what challenges they face in conducting rehabilitation programmes. Nevertheless, the behaviour of the youth seemed to be a major component that contributed to feelings of distress and unease in participants, particularly since this often required extra measures and efforts from participants, making their work more demanding.

Non-Compliance

Participants recognized that their ability to impact change was shaped, and possibly limited, by the levels of commitment of youth to the rehabilitation programmes that they facilitate.

> *"So we have to do an assessment and then I'm gonna tell the child that 'you come through these days'… And then only to find out that the child won't come through. […] So some of them… The challenges is some of them, they don't comply. Especially those ones who are into drugs and these criminal activities."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

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"So, at times, it ends up affecting the child who even becomes non-compliant, you see?" (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

One participant recalled the ripple-effect of non-compliance of the youth by describing her experienced difficulties in managing such cases, which can often include conflict with parents and personal distress.

"I remember the child had a problem with absenteeism and that led me to submitting a non-compliance report. That was a problem to the parent, but I showed her that I have been reaching out to them and they didn't pitch. When I sent that report to the court, it left a bitter taste in their mouths, but we ended up solving that issue. […] Like being blamed, maybe I would say that affected me psychologically. […] It was like I was the one in the wrong for the child's behaviour." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

The participant continued to consider the possible longer-term consequences that could otherwise result from non-compliance to the rehabilitation programmes, and likewise described the personal and emotional impact of this on the self.

"Sometimes it's the children's behaviour. You find that they just do not want to be committed to the programme and these are the children you find offending at a later stage. That's their future down the drain and it's painful. […] Sometimes you do realize that our youth's future isn't looking so good because you see children who do not know where they are heading when it comes to their life. What's sad is that they are given a chance to do better at some point in their life, they won't have another chance to do better. We sit down with them and we make them aware that 'here is a chance for you to right the wrongs and you will never get another chance'. It's sad to see them being caught in the wrong and them ending up in jail because of their offence." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

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Behaviours that Challenge

Prior to referrals to the rehabilitation programmes, the youth, as described by participants, often displayed a number of behaviours that challenged and that later resulted in being in conflict with the law.

> *"And we also, also deal with those that are being charged and even those that are waiting for the trials, so they're all juveniles. And they may be charged for possession of drugs, possession of heroin, possession of dagga, theft, malicious injury of property, yeah, assault GBH [grievous bodily harm]… There's a lot."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

> *"It starts with a child stealing at home, then the child leaves home without getting permission…"* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

> *"There was a case back then that I dealt with, it was an eight-year-old, and he was arrested for murder. So you can imagine how that… An eight-year-old child, what does he know about murder, you know?"* (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

Participants reflected on how such conduct can at times topple over into the rehabilitation programmes and ultimately add to the multiple pressures that participants face in facilitating these. One participant described the 'weight' (gravity) associated with having to testify in court as a result of the youth's misconduct in the programme.

> *"The child do[es]n't come to me, he will just go straight to court and then he will tell court that 'yhu, social worker said this, this, and that'. Something that maybe I did not say. […] So then the court, the magistrate be like, 'uh, we need that social worker to come here and testify and tell us what exactly happened'. […] Now that I'm here, I'm present now, and then the child will be telling another story, you know?"* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

The participant continued to describe the level of distress associated with this process, acknowledging a shift in environment which seemed slightly removed from the customary duties of facilitating the programme. In this way, the participant alluded to the additional yet

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unexpected responsibility of managing behaviours that challenge, not only within the space of the programme, but extending to larger spaces of rehabilitation, such as court.

> *"Uh, it is very stressful, trust me. Cause now the environment, everyone, the lawyers are there, the police is there. The magistrate is… The whole court environment can be like traumatizing, you know?"* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Another participant similarly described how certain dynamics between facilitator and youth influence behaviours of deception and conflict. Specifically, challenges in asserting authority and defining boundaries with some of the youth who do not respond to these were raised.

> *"The child would leave home to come to the programme but would never arrive, and when they did arrive it was like "the social worker hates me and makes me a mockery in front of the others in class." […] They walked out and went and told their parent that I kicked them out and they would not attend the sessions anymore."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

4.2.1.3. Unrelenting Demands ('Jack of All Trades')

While passion and purpose fuelled most discussions around the pursuit of social work as an occupation, participants consistently spoke to the several burdens they shouldered in attempts to navigate and balance the multiple and conflicting responsibilities they faced. The foundation of these discussions often lay in the load of being the only social worker based within a particular office or region.

> *"I was the only social worker working there."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

> *"Yes, I'm the only social worker there. […] More hands are needed but sometimes, somehow, I try my very best so that I can prioritize all the clients. Although it's very, very, very, very, very… You feel tired."* (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

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> *"Obviously, we're gonna need more manpower. Yeah, it's a shortage. I won't lie because I have to see like seven clients a day, it's joh… draining."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

Though working in solitude was not applicable to all participants, responsibilities in the workplace for most were often met with the busy and overburdened systems within which they operated.

> *"I'm based in court, one of the busiest courts in NICRO. So yeah, I do almost everything."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

> *"There is a lot of work in social work. Ja, especially when you are working NGOs because they want things to be perfect."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

> *"You have to do things on your own. […] Every challenge that I come across, I just try to find a solution immediately."* (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

> *"We are also given targets to reach, just like every other corporate company, and we have to reach these targets regardless of the obstacles we may encounter."* (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

The excerpt below eloquently encapsulates the overall sentiment reflected by participants around the multiple hats they wear as social workers employed within the rehabilitation context.

> *"Phela, if you're a social worker, you, you… You're more of a jack of all trades! You're a helper, you're an organizer, you're a counsellor, you're everything."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Despite the tolerance exhibited by participants in their attempts to manage a broad scope of work, a few participants displayed or expressed some aversion toward the time-consuming administrative demands of their jobs.

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"After all, we, as social workers, our job is to talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. And then paperwork, paperwork, paperwork." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

"Joh, it's a lot of admin!" (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"Expect to work under pressure, a lot of admin, joh! […] *Especially the issue of typing and all those things. Our systems are too long."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"It's very discouraging. So much to a sense that you sometimes shy away from doing Youth Empowerment Scheme. […] *Because there's too much paper work.* […] *It's just too much, and the paper work is just a lot, you know it's just a lot."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

Even with the dislike, one participant stressed the importance of this aspect of the job. Here, she highlighted that failure to complete the administrative tasks, including record logs of groups facilitated, equates to such work not being recognized or financially compensated for.

"Ja, because in social work, whatever is done and is not recorded is not done! […] Admin has to be perfect, you have to be paid for some of the things that you have done." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Another participant reflected on his own experiences of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion that result from such work demands.

"We do all those things by the end of the month. So that one is stressing a lot because we also have to update the files, create files for the group that you conducted, do this thing what they call, I think, the marking submissions. That one is stressing. It's giving a lot of... I can say burnout. […] So that one is giving us a lot of stress." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

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4.2.1.4. 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Child'

Rooted in providing a safe, facilitating and healthy environment for youth, a well-known African proverb was echoed loudly in interviews to delineate the greater, systemic challenges associated with youth rehabilitation.

> *"It takes a village to raise a child. Very important."* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)
>
> *"I think I like to work with children cause you believe that it takes a village to raise a child."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

A strong argument was held among participants about the wide social responsibility that accompanies the growth and development of youth. One participant conveyed this message as an obligation that is nor questionable or negotiable.

> *"Whether you are a parent by giving birth or not… If there is a child growing up in front of your eyes, you are automatically a parent."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Participants strongly asserted the notion of the importance of collaborative approaches in youth rehabilitation. Discussions expanded on the notion of the *"village"* to include families, local communities, schools and law enforcement agencies. While support has been demonstrated by some (discussed below under the Theme 3: Perceived Availability of Social Support), participants likewise identified significant gaps in the workings of the *"village"* that ultimately disrupt their attempts towards the synchronicity of working together to *"raise the child"*. Specifically, participants focused on inconsistent parental involvement, community knowledge, limited community insight.

Inconsistent Parental Involvement

A general consensus existed in the interviews around the imperative role that parents embody in the participants' efforts at providing rehabilitative services to youth.

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"It is important for the parent to be present during programmes, there is a part that they have to play. […] That taught me to have regular communication with the parents" (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

"You must be there for the kids! And avoid those things of saying children mustn't be exposed to some of the things, because when they are going to learn it from other people, they are going to get the wrong information. They're going to trust that information, use it, and that's when they find themselves in conflict with the law." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

However, participants also pointed out that parental participation is not always a reality. Acknowledgement was made to how this may perpetuate the gaps in the system, and ultimately, complicate and undermine the efforts of participants in the work that they do.

"Half of the families, you ask them to bring the child or children for some of the programmes but some of them, they don't. […] So even their parents, or the behaviour that the children are doing, they're also a part of contributing to the bad behaviours." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"You even called a parent only to find that there is no communication between the client and the child." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

"And then the other challenge is when these young people… Maybe their parents doesn't want to be fully in this, they don't want to be open. […] Meaning what you were doing all along must not be of use to him when he goes back because the parents are not cooperative." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"The challenges that, mm, are sometimes there is that you don't get cooperation from the parents because remember, the child still goes back to the parent to be guided by the parent. So, if they don't take part in this process, the child gets lost. Or you may find that in that particular family, the parents themselves are actually not on the right path or the road, so the child will normalize this whole thing and think that 'no, I don't think it's important for me to be a good citizen because my father has been doing this for years but nothing's ever happened'." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

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One participant noted the emotional impact resulting from a mismatch between expectation and outcomes:

> *"Sometimes I feel disappointed because you realize that sometimes some of the things the parents are doing are because of negligence. Maybe let's say I'm talking about people who are, uh, academically right, educated. We'll find that these people doesn't* [sic] *take things serious[ly], it's just because they are negligent."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Limited Community Insight

The possession of knowledge by local community stakeholders of early risky behaviour, as well as the processes of rehabilitation, was affirmed to be an important influencing factor to the long-term efforts of participants in facilitating programmes for youth.

> *"Yes, the community must be involved."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

> *"So if the children are being taught in their home, their community about their own behaviour, there won't be trouble in their future."* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

In contrast, the lack thereof proved to be challenging for participants in both emotional and practical capacities.

> *"The community threads very far from what we do and even if we do awareness programmes about petty crimes, they don't pay attention."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

> "*Sometimes it's painful to see young people go through certain things that they were not supposed to go through if their parents might have had knowledge to share with them so to avoid all this kind of things. […] Like you know in Psychology, they say maladaptive behaviours."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

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One participant, who occupies a senior position at NICRO, shared her experience of rejection when attempting to secure a new office space for the organization in a local community. This was due to a generalized and stigmatized view by the community around the nature of her work.

> *"Remember, communities, they've got their own ideas and some are traditional ideas, some a little more modern ideas, traditions… It's very hard. So, whether it's a child or adult, the fact that the person was in conflict with the law, they will always stigmatize them. […] It's just like when I was trying to get an office space for this place. I struggled a bit. Because I went to several places and when they hear about the mandate of the services that we give, they were like 'no, you can't rent our space'."* (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

Another participant assumed responsibility for the limited community knowledge on rehabilitation processes among the community, explaining that more initiative needs to be undertaken.

> *"It's evident that the community lacks that knowledge [….] I normally say as social workers it is our duty to expose them to these things to eradicate the hefty crimes. […] The community is ignorant when it comes to things like this and for me, I think we don't do our job as we are expected to. We need to start at the ground and work our way up, explain to the parents that even the small petty crimes are important, make parents concerned because their only concern are serious crimes."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Cooperation between Community Stakeholders

While participants spoke with pride around the work that they do, they voiced frustration around the challenges that arise when other important bodies involved in the rehabilitation processes of youth do not fulfil the duties expected of them.

> *"And so you find that you're doing your work, but then the next person is not doing their work, so it's becomes a problem. It's a delay on your end, you know?"* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

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Two participants shed light on the gaps of the legal system in South Africa and how this implicates the ability of participants to effectively fulfil their duties. One participant spoke about inappropriate referrals to a system that is already overtaxed with demands on resources that would otherwise not have been necessary.

> *"And they're not really, really criminals, like maybe 70 or 80% of them, what they are arrested for… It's just the mistakes, the silly incidents. Uh, the misunderstanding between them and, uh, the SAPS [the South African Police Service] sometimes. You know how South African Police Service works. So you'll even get that you, you don't deserve to be here, you know, to be coming in and out of the court. However, now the court is trying to help you by referring you to us since you were already arrested. So they can just divert you to us so that we can help where we can."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Another participant questioned whether other stakeholders are upholding their duties and responsibilities in ways that allow her to reach the necessary target population. In turn, the participant reflected on how these gaps influence the meaning of her work.

> *"We aren't sure if we are doing a stellar job and so the youngsters are not committing any crimes, or if the police aren't doing their job. If it is the police that aren't doing their job, it's very demotivating because they are not allowing us to do our job because now the youth will be arrested for doing worse crimes, where we could have worked with the youth to teach them how to carry themselves or tell them not to do petty crimes."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

She continued to express how these challenges amplify her concerns and worries:

> *"We have noticed that the rate of serious youth offences is on the rise yet they do not do any petty crimes. That is a serious concern for us social workers and we cannot pinpoint the problem."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Meaning-making, predominantly through evaluation and judgement, became a rich and palpable process in the interviews as participants reflected on the challenges they faced. Being able to implicitly share the essence and self-derived forms of meaning about their

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experiences impressed as an important practice for participants, who all in their own way, explained how certain events in their life course had shaped the way they cope with the work that they do. This is unpacked in the findings' second theme below, Coping Strategies for Stress and Emotional Discomfort.

4.2.2. Theme 2: Coping Strategies for Stress and Emotional Discomfort

Participants' accounts focused on their skillset, emotion regulation, shared experiences with colleagues and sources of distraction such as sport as buffers to the stressors they encounter in the rehabilitation sphere. These are unpacked below in five subthemes, namely: (i) Harnessing Knowledge and Skills (ii) Emotional Suppression; (iii) Acceptance; (iv) Spiritual and Recreational Activities; and (v) Seeking Shared Experiences in the Workplace.

4.2.2.1. Harnessing Knowledge and Skills

Participants' perception of their skillset proved to be a significant source of regulation and organization in a context where so much lies beyond their command. Across interviews, the idea that participants are dependent on the knowledge they have gained through experience resonated deeply in how they understand themselves to cope with the stressors they encounter. Thus, when prompted around coping efforts, participants often spoke first to the practical strategies that they engage and continuously try to hone. For example, problem-solving and time management was generally emphasized as an important means in which to manage and prioritize tasks and responsibilities. Participants who perceived themselves to possess such skills often impressed as confident in their ability to eradicate feelings of distress within the work environment.

> *"Oh, it's just to organise yourself before the month end. Do the report in time."*
> (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

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"I try to prioritize my eight hours' time. Very, very much important." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"Time is a bit of a challenge. […] I compile weekly plan. I plan for the week." (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

Moreover, participants' understanding of the amount and use of knowledge they had appeared to offer a great sense of comfort and control as they navigated the interplay between stress and coping. Participants relied on their literal experience, or expertise in the field, to make sense of the ways in which they coped with the demands and obstacles of their work. These perceptions shaped the idea of having prior experience as enabling a less stressful working environment, and for some participants, encouraged curiosity and motivation to embrace new challenges.

"Having an experience of working at NICRO, I realized that it's just going to be an extension of what I was already doing at [another local organization]." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"We are knowing that somewhere, somehow, after a long time. Because most of the things we are used to, we know how." (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

"Now remember, the experience that I have, mm, in social work and working within an organization, I think also assists me to be able to look at every challenge as an opportunity." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

In addition to perceptions on knowledge and problem-solving skills, the ability to set firm boundaries was similarly avowed an important skill to adopt in order to encourage a healthy work-life balance.

"That's why I'm always advising other social workers 'don't take your work at home. After half past four, just close everything and leave it there. You will see it on the next day'. […] Don't even think about work. Don't even answer somebody from your work. […] Because weekends… It's not time for working." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"We rest on weekends." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

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"I can be here for work and do all my work and stuff. And then when I get home, I shut my mind off about anything that was stressful or positive, whatever happened, and just do that transition. That's also how I'm trying to cope with this work-related stress." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

However, participants noted that a work-life balance was not always easily achievable, intermittently seeing work boil over into other areas of their life. One participant acknowledged the bearing of this overflow on family dynamics.

"This weekend, I had to think about my work, but it's not something that happens every day, or every time or every weekend." (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

"Sometimes I go to the extent of working on weekends to avoid too much backlog." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"And you don't get paid to work for weekends so you take a day off like take a Wednesday you know, you replace it with Saturday." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

"That one is a problem, of course. If you take the work at home, if you're married, that married life will fail because now no one will understand if you are looking at the files and computers instead of communicating and playing with your kids." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

4.2.2.2. Emotional Suppression

The role of the helper emerged as a distinct topic of discussion in all interviews. With participants reflecting on their ethical responsibilities, multiple occupational commitments and broad scope of work, the need to *"be untouchable"* and invulnerable to the emotional cost of their work filled many conversations. A common strategy employed by participants was the conscious blocking of unwanted or undesirable thoughts and emotions, known as *emotional suppression*. Participants demonstrated self-awareness around the purpose of this strategy and were mindful of its implementation as having a perceived protective functioning. Rather than embodying this strategy as a fragment of their personal or occupational identity,

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participants embraced this as a practice that they need to actively and mindfully undertake in order to minimize perceived threat against the emotional consequences of their work. One participant captured the essence of this dynamic by highlighting a stark contrast, and thus noticeable difference, in his emotional expression (how he expressed emotions) in his home environment compared to his work setting. Simultaneously, in a slightly sombre tone, the participant noted how emotionally exhausting this can become.

> *"I show my weakness at home alone, and then I come to work as untouchable. […] Joh, it's… It's really draining. […] It's you actually being able to endure your odds or being able to face any situation that you can go through, you know? To act cool out of everything. […] As much as it sad, but you don't have to show. You know? Yeah, you don't have to show. You have to be… Have to act tough. […] But at the end of the day, also, yes, the same things that touches them, they touch you as well. They touch you."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

Another participant, who also identified with this practice, rationalized emotional avoidance with reasoning grounded in his professional practice. He linked the general display of emotion with unsuitability to the job and recalled developing this ideology from his training. Though alluding to the importance of emotion regulation, the participant framed emotional expression, such as crying, as unacceptable and asserted that it would not be entertained by him within the context of his work.

> *"Even in varsity, our lecturers when they were teaching us… Maybe you, when you feel like crying, you have to hold your tears and maybe you cry when you get home. You can't cry in front of the client. That means you are not ready for your job, you are not fit because you have to be fit like emotionally. You have to be very fit emotionally. […] There you have to face them and be very professional. […] It's not the good thing to cry, especially in front of a client. So I'm like 'if I cry, that actually means I'm in the wrong field', you know? So I'm like 'no, that's, that's not gonna happen'."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

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The above account highlights a tough balancing act of upholding professional standards while also counting (and being mindful of) the emotional cost that his job entails. This as if to suggest, given his lasting impressions from his training, that the two are mutually exclusive in the realm of the professional practice within rehabilitative work. While participants communicated their attempts at creating distance between the emotional ramifications of client cases by endeavouring to disengage from it, two participants explained that this is not always helpful as they often find themselves confronted with unresolved feelings later on.

> *"Some of the things, most of the things, I 'de-rule' after each and every case and I leave everything at work. Maybe if I'm seated, maybe not thinking of anything or doing anything… It is then that maybe it might trigger in my mind, and then the only thing I can be thinking of is 'how can I be of use to these people?'"* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

> *"I mean, having to take experiences because when they start sharing their personal experiences, you start taking those experiences and then you keep them in heart. Then you go home and you try to think that 'how can someone possibly go through these experiences when they're like 15 years old?' […] You start taking their problem as your own, you know? […] But for you personally you have to go back home with all the troubled stuff."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

Still, however, inherent reservations around emotional expression extended beyond professional and ethical guidelines. One participant justified emotional suppression through gender-normative expectations of himself not only as a social worker, but as a male too. It can be deduced then that such avoidance would be present in other areas of the participants' life, as is evidently presented below, inhibiting his true expression of his emotional experiences.

> *"And then imagine a child that I've been trying to help in that situation right there. Magistrate would be like "okay, police, take the child straight to Westville Prison.*

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You know, you've heard about Westville Prison? So whenever the person is going there, it's, it's difficult. So the child will start crying in there and then imagine me not familiar with that environment. Am I not gonna cry as well? Okay, but at least I am a male, so I'll try and hold [...] I'm very strong. I'm very strong." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

It soon became clear that emotional expression was not only undesirable within the confines of the participants' job. To 'put on a brave face' in the workplace was similarly mirrored, in some occasions, in the interview process. This was evident mostly in the fact that participants were often very intuitive and forthcoming about the emotional and psychological experiences of the youth attending their programmes.

"The first few sessions, the, the… The group members might not talk that much. Only answer and keep quiet, answer and keep quiet, while they are observing the situations. Maybe it's because their self is still threatened and then they are also experiencing symbolized experiences where they feel that 'if I can say something, maybe these other youths, they will think maybe I'm much better' or 'I may say it and then the facilitator may say it is wrong'. (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

On the other hand, however, some resistance was apparent in the expression of participants' own emotional experiences. One participant had impressed to the interviewer as emotively reflecting on her experience of familial support. When prompted in this regard, she quickly asserted an absence or distance from emotion that she alluded to not warranting further discussion in the interview.

"I don't worry about that. […] I'm not emotional. You ask me that. Don't worry about that. Whatever we're talking about makes me emotional?! No!" (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

While the participant was potentially reluctant to engage conversations around her own familial and personal experiences, she was able to express feelings of sadness around the context and experiences of the youth that she assists. This was a general pattern that followed

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in interviews, with participants briefly recognizing and naming their emotional experiences, though not always delving fully into these (although it is noteworthy that the current study's interview schedule did not necessarily have this aim or prompt for this).

> *"Mm, sometimes it is very much painful when you realize what the children are going through."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Some insight was subsequently shown into the greater psychosocial consequences of emotional avoidance and/or repression within the job. One participant acknowledged the reality and burden associated with needing to repress emotion at all times and concluded that access to psychological intervention may be necessary.

> *"I feel like a lot of people are coming through to us to share their experiences and whatever challenges they're facing… Crying. And then where are we expected to go as social workers? Cause I believe I… Some of us need a counselling as well. […] Cause imagine, I have my, my own personal issues. However, I do not have to show that to other people. So when the clients come through to me and then share their issues and stuff, and I feel like then when they cry, I feel like crying."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Consistently, three participants spoke with relief at the end of the interviews around a perceived therapeutic component offered within the interview process. The participants recognized the interviews as offering a different experience to that offered in, for example, supervisory spaces. Speaking of the power of debriefing around challenges and stressors, participants alluded to the interviews as enabling a reflective space to speak of their work through a new lens. Rather than focusing on the process or outcomes of the work that participants do, the shift onto subjective experiences of participants was associated with feelings of relief and rejuvenation.

> *"I feel better, you, you see… I've just talked about the resources and stuff."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

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"I debriefed in a way." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"Mm, I feel as if we're just starting now. (Laughs) […] So I think it makes me feel refreshed because somehow I'm putting in words what I'm actually doing on a daily basis and also what I've been doing for the past few years." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

4.2.2.3. Acceptance

A sense of resignation frequently dominated participants' responses to their multiple duties as facilitators of rehabilitation programmes, often showing admirable grace toward the fact that these are "*part of my weight. Like requirements, so I have to do it, ja."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience). Regardless of the demands that they carry, participants spoke to the need to take ownership of one's work and accept the consequences of perceived failure to adequately fulfil one's duties.

"We know what is expected from us, uh, on that day and what's I have to do and stuff. But then again, you know, if we are not meeting the target and stuff, obviously a supervisor will have to, you know… (Laughs) But again, you can't take that, uh, like personal, like 'now I'm being punished' or something. You know that 'I have to take your responsibility of this'. If you are being honest, you are being truthful to yourself, you know that 'I'm expected to do this and this and that, and that's, uh… If I'm being punished, it's because I deserve it after all'." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"You sometimes find that normally conflicts start because we do not own up to the avenues that we took before we got to that point. It's just a blame game." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Participants spoke to a process of acclimatization that seemed to happen inevitably in their work environments. Acceptance and reception of work circumstances as they are gave way to the normalization of the subsequent pressures associated with these.

"But you learn, you adapt. As a process. […] So you get to, you get used to it. […] I mean, you have to grow as a social worker, you need to grow thick skin, you know?

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> *[…] I mean, you get used to these things. You get used to these things because yes, I have conducted so many Youth Empowerment Scheme to a point that it's becoming a norm for me."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

One participant, however, briefly questioned her susceptibility to become desensitized to situations that would otherwise be perceived with difficulty, such as the nature of her work.

> *"I don't know as whether I said I get used to it, and then I think it's a normal thing."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

4.2.2.4. Seeking Shared Experiences in the Workplace

Being able to derive meaning from a connection with a greater whole was a significant factor in participants' commitment to their work. Feelings of relatedness and proximity emerged as imperative in enabling participants to connect with a sense of purpose. All participants spoke about the bearing of the many demands of their work (as discussed under Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge). A great emphasis was placed on having to work in isolation, while simultaneously basing personal and professional value on the perceived competency with which such work is done (as discussed later in Theme 4: Identity Beyond the Self). In this, it was clear that it was of great significance for participants to turn to others, when able to, and feel validated in the difficulties and hurdles associated with their work. One participant alluded to the validation and normalization associated with knowing that she is not alone, and that other colleagues have faced similar challenges. She likewise inferred how this process can be empowering.

> *"And also just to see and hear that such a situation has been experienced by someone else. […] That's also another way for us to overcome such. It made me overcome and move on from the situation."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

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This was supported by other participants, who suggested that support-seeking behaviour that results in being able to receive feedback from colleagues who have successfully managed similar stressors creates a space of comfort and learning.

> *"And then sometimes I can even explain some of my challenges with my colleagues so that I can hear what their inputs are on these kinds of things. […] It's a sort of… Uh, debriefing sessions because we share with other… With our colleagues from other provinces. We can hear what they're going through, we share ideas and we learn a lot!"* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

> *"But I'd say 'hey, this is what I'm dealing with at work.' You know? And then they'll start and, you know, they'll, they'll… They'll show support. […] You don't stop learning and someone will tell you like a different approach."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

> *"So I'm like, we are… We are not alone. It's a normal thing within the social work profession or within the organizations that have like social work professionals. So we are like 'okay, we're gonna be experiencing this'.* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

An acknowledgment was made to an implicit general understanding among colleagues, where sharing experiences within a collective context that understands and empathizes encourages feelings of togetherness.

> *"The social workers, not the supervisor, the social workers, they… They're very supportive because they know, they know, they know what you're going through."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

One participant highlighted the importance of creating a shared space early on in preparing to facilitate rehabilitation groups. While he reported feeling satisfied with the training that he had received upon being employed by NICRO, he also reflected on how the sharing of common experiences in the workplace, as well as being able to seek support in others, equips staff with more tools with which to effectively run rehabilitation groups.

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"So I wish, like, if I was provided with the proper training where all the professionals within the office will sit down and then we hear from their experiences, about what their experiences and challenges, maybe, they face when they're running programmes. I know earlier on I said it's only like three or four social workers that's run programmes that consist of youth. However, just the, the general knowledge, general… Mm, experience from other professionals, even though they do other groups, not, uh, for youth. But I think that it was gonna be, uh, very beneficial for me." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

4.2.2.5. Spiritual and Recreational Activities

Communal practices beyond the rehabilitation context were likewise regarded as significant processes that have allowed participants to sustain healthy boundaries and a more balanced lifestyle. Spirituality, or practices associated with the connection to something greater than oneself, were mentioned as an outlet to manage and reduce stress. While some participants identified with this aspect more strongly than others, some form of connection with spiritual beliefs and practices proved to be a protective factor for participants.

"Very important, family and church." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"I think even praying. I'm… I'm not that Christian, but it keeps me going." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

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Moreover, recreational activities such as exercise and socializing were commonly identified among participants as offering spaces of connection and community that act as buffers for distress.

"Oh, there's nothing you can do, just keep yourself calm and enjoy yourself on weekends (Laughs). If I'm saying enjoy yourself, enjoy yourself in different ways. Like social workers, some of them, they're not drinking, some of them are drinking. Some of them they go to church." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

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"I'm a very sporty person, so yeah. I play a lot of football, and I've been playing it since varsity. […] To cool of you know, just to forget a bit about the problem, something like that." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

In addition to the varied coping strategies employed by participants, a widely recognized appreciation for the social support networks they held was evident throughout interviews. The perceived positive influence of connection and shared spaces with others in managing the various demands and challenges of their work is presented in the following chapter, Theme 3: Perceived Availability of Social Support.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Perceived Availability of Social Support

The interviews consistently revealed that establishing connections with others was deeply ingrained as a core value among participants. Not only were these spaces impactful on their ability to cope with stress and adversity within the rehabilitation realm, they were similarly understood to be spaces of acceptance, learning and personal growth. Participants' subjective evaluations of the support they received from their social networks is presented in four subthemes, including: (i) Colleague and Supervisory Support; (ii) Organizational Support; (iii) Other Stakeholders and External Agencies; and (iv) Familial and Partner Support.

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4.2.3.1. Colleague and Supervisory Support

Despite a number of practical and personal challenges faced by participants, most spoke fondly of the organization they work for. Specifically, numerous references were made to colleagues-turned-family as participants reflected on the relationships they reported having built within the work setting. This sense of belonging was evident in participants' mentions of their colleagues as their *"family"*, *"mothers"* and *"friends"*, and has likewise inspired a continued commitment to the organization for most participants.

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> *"I have like, friends that I regard as a family. They're social workers. Yes, they are very supportive, shame. […] But I will say, it is a very good environment. The environment is very good, we keep loving each other. We know each other. […] We're just one big family, shame. […] Knowing that you're waking up every day, you're going to work and you would see your other family. […] So I think that also kept me alive or kept me like to attend NICRO."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

> *"This is my first job, so I've been here, this company, ever since I started working, so yeah. They've always been great to me […] I mean, it's the work environment. It's the support that you give and the relationships that you built within the organization. The NICRO organization. So you have your people who are mother figures here, you have friends, yeah, colleagues that you, you go out with. You have people you go to for, for… For advice and unlike, mm, despite the programmes that we do, it's the relationship we have here and, and the organization sort of like motivates you to stay."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

One participant spoke with gratitude about the support she received after the significant loss of a parent, equating the care offered by her colleagues to that typically received by family.

> *"Even at work, I will say, with my superiors. Mm, just remember, I've just lost my dad a few months ago. So I had to be strong because I was living with him. […] Ja, so I had to… So what I was trying, I wanna to tell you, is that the support that I'm getting even at work is… They are like my family. My supervisors, they will do like some sort of individually supervision to see whether you're coping or not. So I think that's also, I have to mention here, effort."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Consistently, other participants also recognized the role of their colleagues and supervisors in sustaining spaces of holding in which to seek support. Specifically, resource and information sharing as well as emotional and evaluative support were perceived as significant sources of aid in times of need. This felt generally accessible to participants in individual and supervisory spaces.

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"I have a, a colleague, obviously amongst all the colleagues we have, there is that one colleague. [...] I just talk with my other colleague. That's how I handle it." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

"I feel supported because we do have supervisors. If you come across any problem, just discuss the matter with a supervisor then they will advise you a solution." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

4.2.3.2. Organizational Support

In addition to the perceived support received from colleagues, a few participants also spoke to the influence of support received from the organization as a managerial body. One participant emphasized the importance of such support on impacting individual well-being and confidence. More specifically, she associated the encouragement by superiors of freedom and professional growth among staff as a vital source of reassurance within the rehabilitation context. It was unclear whether this view had stemmed from a similar personal experience of being *"undermined"* in the workspace previously, or whether it was merely a reflective stance that resulted from the power of the support that she has received.

"A person needs to be developed and needs to be empowered instead of being, uh, undermined. [...] Because if you keep undermining a person then they will lose their self-confidence in the work that they do and they'll end up not doing quality work, because even their production will go down, you see? For me, I think, the company itself is being supportive, because the more I'm growing, the more they are open or flexible in terms of how I do things, I implement things, it makes it easy for me." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

Conflicting views arose around participants' perceptions of the current support that they receive at an organizational level. Some participants affirmed feeling supported in this way, acknowledging the learning spaces offered by NICRO as an extension of the organizational support available to them.

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> *"We do have support! NICRO, they're trying by all means to do whatever they can do to support us. The message is… The daily message is from our HR is they're supporting ourselves. […] We've got support. We support each other. They support us."* (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

> "*And then, I think, the other support that we have is we have weekly learnings as NICRO staff that we have online."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Nonetheless, two participants expressed not feeling heard by the organization about their concerns. Though acknowledging the inherent constraints in working for a NPO, these sentiments were conveyed in relation to finances and access to resources.

> *"But then, now I can say there is no full support. There is no full support from the organization."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

> *"The support… I can say there's no staff support because all the time, most of the time, the increment… We are not heard about some of the things like financial issues. […] This is the support we must get from our company. […] If our company can sort out issues like the car and salaries, we won't be complaining, we will work… Working in a conducive environment. […] But they are trying." "* (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

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4.2.3.3. Other Stakeholders and External Agencies

A golden thread in discussions around offender rehabilitation in South Africa has been the involvement of several stakeholders to work holistically and collaboratively towards common rehabilitation goals. Participants identified some gaps in the greater system that contribute to impingements in this regard (as discussed in Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge, Subtheme 4: 'It Takes a Village to Raise a Child'). Nevertheless, participants affirmed that stakeholders, such as other local organizations, have been receptive to their efforts to collaborate. Some stakeholders were positively identified as showing their support, and ultimately contributing to the efforts of participants in their work with the youth.

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"I was setting up meetings and reaching out to several stakeholders within the area. […] Hence we end up inviting other stakeholders to also take part in the awareness campaign that we do." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

"Well, especially from people, other stakeholders that we are working with. […] They are very supportive and they seems to value our work." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Moreover, schools were included as active participants in youth rehabilitation efforts, with participants stating that these bodies show a need to partner with and receive services from NICRO. Simultaneously, joint efforts with community leaders were framed as further sources of support and validation.

"We have another programme that we use for community work. We do it in schools, meaning that after each and every YES programme, we have to adopt one school in a certain community and work with that school." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

"Because I work with the community leaders, in the schools. You can go together… They allow us to do campaign awareness, everything." (Participant 8; 44-year-old female; 13 years' experience)

4.2.3.4. Familial and Partner Support

While the rehabilitation context dominated most interviews, many participants recognized the importance of securing avenues of support and holding outside of the workspace. The role of familial support was generally presented as the most influential form of external support, with participants perceiving their families as providing outlets of relief and debrief, as well as sources of encouragement for participants in their professional pursuits.

"Oh, if I say family support, I mean that I am able to get home and discuss with them. Even if it's not into detail about what really happened, but being able to speak about how my day went… It's one of the things that really make my day." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

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"He [father] encouraged me to be focused." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

One participant recalled how his family's personal experiences of receiving social work intervention has reinforced his approach to his work. More specifically, he noted the vital role of parental support in keeping him grounded in his values in his work with clients, and acknowledged how this acts as a motivating factor, even in times of distress.

"Cause even the parents, you know, parents you have at home, I still have mom and dad. And then, and then I'm not gonna go further deep into that. However, mom will be like 'please, (participant 2), treat people well because I know social workers, they can be rude sometimes', you know? Because my mom has been maybe doing, going to social workers before and you know, she knows how they, some of them treat people. So whenever I start, uh, like maybe a client will be doing something totally wrong, and then in my mind there will be those words that my mom said to me that 'please try treat people well'. So, yeah. I think even that it keeps me going. It keeps me going. My parents' support." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Although not explicitly speaking of an awareness of self in context, one participant alluded to embracing one's true identity, beyond the professional boundaries, outside of work. His reference, and seeming comfortability with being able to access this part of self with family, further suggests that this may not always be viable within the confines of youth rehabilitation (such as is discussed under Theme 4: Identity Beyond the Self).

"Weekend time, just spoil yourself. Just be there with your family and spend time with them. Then you'll start work on Monday. [...] Just be yourself outside work, with your family." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

Likewise, cultivating meaningful relationships with others was regarded as valuable in sustaining a support system where participants can share emotional experiences, seek advice and receive validation. It was noteworthy that some participants shared that these have

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been long-term relationships, showcasing the significance of their perceived social support systems in their lives.

> *"You were asking about how I cope. You know, I'm married. For 18 years I've been married. It's also one of the ways that I relieve myself from thinking about work and stuff. I will spend some quality time with my husband and just be with him."* (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

> *"I have a small circle of friends, maybe it's… It's the five of us. We've met a long time ago, since we were all students doing first and second years at varsity. […] The friends' support, it plays a major role. Yeah, so I can count them in that they keep me going."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

An additional lens was uncovered in interviews around the way in which participants evaluated their experiences in the rehabilitative space. The following theme, Identity Beyond the Self, is argued to represent binaries laden in how rehabilitation work is experienced by those in the sector. Though a general consensus has been presented around the notion of working within the rehabilitative work as inherently stressful, the theme presented below highlights that, as much as it is stressful to work in the rehabilitative space, there is another lens through which the work can be seen and/or is experienced.

4.2.4. Theme 4: Identity Beyond the Self

Without exception, when describing their work in rehabilitation with youth offenders, participants introduced multiple understandings of themselves in relation to others, to their sense of competence and to their professional identity. Participants' sense of self dominated discussions around their perceptions of themselves as tools in their line of work and how this was corroborated by the outcomes of their efforts. In unanimously describing themselves as tools to impact change, participants spoke to their self-view in context with the recognition, magnitude and effects of such change. As a result, little mention was made, and thus presented in interviews, to a sense of identity that was removed from occupational duties and

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responsibilities. Rather, participants explored, described and presented how they understood themselves to be as part of a greater whole working against the backdrop of offender rehabilitation. Three subthemes are explored within this theme, namely: (i) Sense of Self in Relation to Others; (ii) Competent and Effective Self; and (iii) Professional Identity.

4.2.4.1. Sense of Self in Relation to Others

A selfless foot was put forward in every interview around fulfilling the needs of others. In interviews, most participants presented with and represented an identity of self in their relationships with others. Particularly, these relationships were explored within the bounds of the rehabilitation context, with participants often describing how they understood themselves within the dynamics and interactions they shared with their clients. Identity within this space focused not on showcasing participants' unique view of themselves as compared to other people, but rather establishing how the view of the self that they embodied connected with others. Participants' self-concept was then perceived as being intimately allied to the social and occupational contexts within which they existed. As a result, a significant undertone of accommodating and going beyond limits to be of service to clients was present in most interviews.

> *"So when I get to the office, I'm like, 'whoever that comes within the door, I'll try by all means to help that person'. You know, you, you… You go beyond your duties, the duties that you have at NICRO."* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

> *"But at the same time I feel like it motivates you to conduct a programme in a very conducive manner or in a very effective manner because there's someone now who touched you and you really want to make a difference."* (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

At times, this was accompanied by feeling like efforts were never enough, and that there was always more to be done.

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"I felt bad that, like, I didn't do enough." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

"It seems like we aren't doing enough or we did not do anything at all." (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

The need to always *"do more for others"* and *"be something to someone"* was often found to be an amalgamation of participants' past personal experiences and hopes for the future. One participant expressed a great sense of identification with the youth that he worked with by reflecting on his early life, which once mirrored experiences similar to those present in the rehabilitation groups that he facilitated. In empathizing with the experiences of the youth, the participant delicately recalled the role of social work in altering his life course at a young age. Ultimately, being able to share a common emotional space with his clients appeared to have been cathartic for the participant in making meaning of his work, purpose and identity within.

"You know what, eish… I… I was a very busy young adult, you know… I was… Joh, I was very troublesome, I was very chaotic, and after I had been enrolled for social work, I wanted to work in a place where people who were vulnerable, as in people that maybe, mm… Children, stuff like that… I wanted to deal with delinquent youth, you know, to help them see and help them to get into line in terms of… To not make the mistakes that I did, you know? […] You know, half of the youth that I deal with, the people are doing things that I was doing back then." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

In experiencing similar protective countertransference towards the youth, two participants felt connected to their clients through the lens of parenthood.

"Most of the time I relate them with my own children. So that is why I am always motivated to work with young offenders, especially the ones at school." (Participant 1; 25-year-old male; 7 years' experience)

"Right now these kids are losing out on a great future and it affects me a lot as a mother. I am a person who loves kids. […] That affects me a lot as a mom and a

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> *social worker who loves her job. I love seeing children learning from their mistakes and showing them that there can be good from their wrongdoing."* (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

It was clear that the multiple hats worn by participants (described in Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge) was encouraged by an understanding of identity that was based not only on individual and personal characteristics, but which also acknowledged the complex nature of existing within larger social and cultural contexts. A general positive connotation to this extensive and multifaceted identity was recognized across interviews, with participants often describing how this bleeds over into other areas of their life. One participant described how her encounters at work had influenced her approach to her own family, specifically within the role of motherhood. Expressing this with gratitude, the participant relayed how her experiences as a social worker inspire her to impact systemic change not only at work, but at home too.

> *"When I'm at home, if I don't want to… I don't want to do better things for my kids, and then my children end up doing other things. Even though I might not stop them, but I must just be, need to be, open with them that they know 'if we want something, we can approach our mother. Our mother is a flexible person that you can talk, share anything, anything, with her'."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

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4.2.4.2. Competent and Effective Self

Implicit in most interviews seemed to have been a direct link between one's ability to impact and/or create change and a view of self that is competent. Impacting change, whether on individual, communal or organizational levels, was often spoken about by participants in context with their perceived abilities to influence and shape circumstances to effect such change. Views of self then varied according to what participants had acknowledged as being positively impactful or influential, or alternatively seen as an accomplishment.

"So I think from their feedback, starting from the letters of like, on the evaluation, things that we do on the last day of the programme, it makes me happy. […] I managed to say something positive, something that that can change a person's behaviour, you know?" (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

"I'm more of an asset to the organization in that only during the first session, or I can say during an assessment, I could already see change in clients." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

A sense of validation stemming from seeing their work effecting meaningful and significant change in others was widely associated with the positive outcomes of facilitating rehabilitation programmes. All participants described feelings of satisfaction stemming from their occupational efforts at some point in the interviews, and generally recognized the widespread impact of these efforts as meaningful intrinsic rewards. The primary catalyst of these rewards, and consequent feelings of competency, were typically contextualized within the perceived ability to impact change and progress.

"They [the youth participating in the rehabilitation programmes] can come to you after maybe three years and say "you've changed my life, you've changed me like this." And that's how we rate our success." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

"They are happy now, they're not crying anymore, then you will see that there's something at least I'm doing in life that brings other people's life back up higher, neh." […] Ja, they actually give you that positive light in someone's heart. (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

"That is so satisfying to know that you've changed someone's life. […] At the end of the day you find that it was worth it." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

"I was motivated by seeing a person who was an offender change and do right. […] What I loved the most was about advocating the change that has happened. […] So it's very encouraging to see change happening." (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

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"There is no feeling that can top that… Seeing growth even in those who have no growth, but the little things count in changing a person. I normally say people change in different ways, so we look for the little change that there is. […] So it makes me happy to see a child commit to a programme from the start right until the end." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

Although all participants spoke to the various psychological, contextual and practical challenges they face daily (discussed in Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge), experiences of personal and professional growth were frequently identified as motivating factors to persevere in their field. In facilitating rehabilitation programmes that focus on transformation, participants likewise found themselves undergoing similar processes in parallel. These processes of growth were captured in various ways, with participants describing improved confidence, self-improvement and greater opportunities for professional development which ultimately cultivated feelings of self-efficacy.

"It starts with the youth which then becomes personal change in that I observe with astonishment that I can rehabilitate someone and that brings about confidence in myself." (Participant 5; 40-year-old male; 6 years' experience)

"That makes me continue to learn as a social worker… Learning to work with children and the ways in which the programmes work and how to communicate with the youth." (Participant 6; 32-year-old female; 6 years' experience)

"I could do my own research and also integrate what already NICRO has developed to make it more efficient and effective, you know? […] For me, it's more on the professional development, and also experiencing developed fields in my profession." (Participant 9; 38-year-old female; 11 years' experience)

"I've been to two different radio stations… I've been to national TV. […] So that alone, it keeps me going […] I love my job, I love my profession, and I'm… I'm still going far, I believe." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

In addition, the perspective of others seemed to act as a mirror within which participants viewed themselves within the rehabilitation sphere. Predominantly, validation

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and recognition seemed to shape participants' ability to evaluate and attribute value to themselves in the work that they do. In speaking of the youth, as well as the broader community, one participant was pleased to relay how her work had been well-received by others after receiving a letter from a client.

> *"With the letter of appreciation, you would see that they… You are valued, you are valued. […] I think they value us."* (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Another participant described how much worth she placed on the recognition of stakeholders towards her own work, as this enhanced feelings of being capable and proficient to effectively conduct programmes. Though not explicitly stated, this recognition appeared to validate and encourage her pursuit of social work.

> *"Very, very, very much important especially when I… As I told you that I have passion about social work."* (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

Conversely, one participant spoke about how some perceived barriers to impacting change, such as those discussed in Theme 1: Sources of Stress and Challenge, likewise influence how one appreciates and values oneself in the field.

> *"Your, your self-esteem, you can't be even proud of yourself that 'okay, I'm…. I'm a social worker', you know? I'm a social worker. That alone can make you feel like less of social worker".* (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Participants also brought to the fore that the view of others served to highlight potential insecurities in themselves. One participant appeared uneasy as he reflected on emotions that were brought up by how he thought his young clients perceived him due to his physical appearance. He exclaimed that *"this is always the hardest"* and implied that such interpretations negatively impact and undermine his capabilities and view of himself as competent.

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"And you find people who, since I'm short… I'm also short… Say 'he can't help'. They'll say 'hai, he look[s] like… We look like we're the same age, so what is it that you can tell me because you still learning yourself', you know? So it's always discouraging." (Participant 4; 27-year-old male; 5 years' experience)

4.2.4.3. Professional Identity

The topic of professional identity emerged in every interview, serving as a means in which to contextualize the multiple and competing roles that participants undertake in their facilitation of rehabilitation programmes. A number of participants explained what it meant to be a social worker in this space, which typically encompassed a particular set of values, skills, knowledge and ethical guidelines that aid in the promotion of social justice and well-being of others (these different aspects are explored in previous themes). As an identity that is vastly faceted and multi-layered, a significant focus in the participants' narratives lay on the empowerment of individuals, families and communities. In return, participants identified the fulfilment of a personal passion in a way that was repeatedly relayed with immense compassion and care for others.

"Some… They say social work is the calling. I've seen that, like observing the senior social workers." (Participant 2; 26-year-old male; 3 years' experience)

Everyone's, like a social worker's goal, is to see one of your clients striving towards excellence. (Participant 3; 30-year-old female; 3 years' experience)

Throughout interviews, participants communicated very strongly that they were committed to their work in rehabilitation for a greater purpose. All-encompassing, the fundamental meaning and essence of participants' professional identity rested in their appreciation for the delicate yet life-altering services they provide.

"Social work is like being a doctor, you're working with the life of people. […] We need to be careful what we tell people. We need to be careful of what you're doing to other people. Use the little that you know, so that people can get help." (Participant 7; 50-year-old female; 8 years' experience)

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5. CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion of Findings

5.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter Five aligns the aim of the study, which was to explore stress, coping and perceived social support of community stakeholders within the context of youth offender rehabilitation within South Africa, with the themes derived from data analysis. The chapter considers and merges the extensive range of literature that was explored in Chapter Two, as well as the significant findings presented in Chapter Four, within the theoretical framework (Transactional Model of Stress and Coping) outlined in Chapter One. This is done in attempts to deepen the understanding of the participants' experiences as facilitators of rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders and further contextualize these within the South African setting.

5.2. Discussion of Main Findings

The methodological approach guiding this study allows for the use of experience, insight and skill in which to interpret and appreciate reality (Bryman, 2016). This provides leeway and support for the inclusion of clinical inferences and conjecture by the researcher in the discussion of the research findings. Moreover, this lends backing to the formulation and integration of such findings utilizing the abovementioned theoretical framework that guides this study, in efforts to understand the interplay between stress, coping and perceived social support within the rehabilitation context.

5.2.1. Sources of Stress and Challenge

The challenges associated with navigating the NPO landscape, as discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review, pave the way for practical and emotional difficulties that coexist alongside a number of obstacles faced in the greater offender rehabilitation and reintegration agenda reform in South Africa. Notwithstanding the fact that these challenges are a prevalent topic of discussion in local literature (Gxubane, 2018; Herbig & Hesselink,

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2012; Renard & Snelgar, 2016), participants presented with difficulties in identifying challenges that for them seemed impactful. It was initially presumed that potential language barriers impacted the understanding of this enquiry, yet even participants who were interviewed in their home language presented similarly when faced with a space to reflect on the less favourable aspects of their job. It later became clear that participants' initial resistance to describe challenges could have resulted from a maintenance of values, assumptions and moral compass associated with their job. In other words, adhering to these professional standards could make it challenging to diverge from the numerous coping strategies linked to them (discussed further below), as any potential criticism or disapproval from them would contradict these professional principles. Nonetheless, with prompting, participants were eventually able to identify practical, support-based and contextual challenges that significantly contributed to their experiences of stress, and to some degree predicted their resulting coping approaches.

Contextually, participants noted that limited access to resources to successfully complete their tasks often calls for a 'siloed', self-reliant approach that incorporates innovation and creativity. Concerns around the long-lasting impact of their efforts under these conditions were raised, and linked to subjective queries around optimally fulfilling their role. Associated implications with this pertained to doubting the benefits and results of their intervention, which could negatively influence a sense of hope and motivation for participants, and in turn may increase experiences of stress and other mental health difficulties (Tighe et al., 2012). Moreover, the added complexities of working with behaviours that challenge in rehabilitation groups requires participants to engage in proceedings, such as that of the court. These were labelled by some participants as unexpectedly upsetting and exhausting, given the burden of being perceived by the offending youth (who their work purportedly seeks to assist) as being on the 'other side' of the law,

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thereby being perceived as betraying the trust earned through their work. This, together with the idea that other stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation processes of the youth may not consistently fulfil their responsibilities, pointed to a system that further isolated participants. Additionally, the varied functions and roles that participants undertook was not limited to their work at NICRO. Ward (2013) notes that ethical and professional standards specific to correctional forensic contexts tend to recognize obstacles and shortcomings within this sphere, yet oftentimes arguably do not provide guidance on how this lends risk of (inevitable) dual relationships as a practitioner in these contexts (see Chapter Two: Literature Review for a greater discussion on this). As was evident from the interviews, the blurred policies on rehabilitation of offenders, coupled with limited avenues within which to navigate these, resulted in participants describing themselves as 'Jacks of All Trades'. It could be argued that the diverse foci on the therapeutic, statutory and relational dimensions of their roles had resulted in a form of role 'dilution' that had prompted participants to assert their professional autonomy, recognize and accept the challenges within their organization and still work outside of any constraints to meet professional and organizational targets (Bark et al., 2023). This way of working was termed as exhausting by participants, who oftentimes made reference to feelings of stress and burnout associated with it.

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5.2.2. Coping Strategies for Stress and Emotional Discomfort

Though mostly situated within emotion-focused coping, processes of coping were described in ways that lessened the emotional load associated with working in the rehabilitation context. All in all, the emotional labour involved in rehabilitation service delivery calls for the use of coping strategies that mitigate its impact (Sonnentag et al., 2017). While participants turned to their own valuations of their experiences to justify the use of such coping strategies, it is important to unpack what role, function and meaning these coping strategies held in the stress management practices of participants.

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Participants' unremitting attempts at negotiating organizational needs and priorities in a busy and overburdened system with limited resource access could be argued to have been compensated for by coping strategies that protected against the strain associated therewith. Drawing briefly on the work of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, Voronov and Vince (2012) contend that engagement in the defence of suppression, such as that seemingly displayed by participants, function at the organizational level in work contexts to ameliorate possible anxieties existing at such level. In the case of the participants, a combination of challenges at personal, organizational and systemic levels may have characterized such anxieties and consequent need for the use of defences. The authors note that these regressive tendencies can be mitigated through self-management practices, including critical self-reflexivity (Voronov & Vince, 2012). Notably, however, participants experienced some difficulty in exploring ego-threatening issues, which in counterpart reinforces the use of defences and consequent coping strategies they currently engage. Of note, nonetheless, was the fact that participants who had less experience in the field seemed able to verbalize the extent of their challenges and difficulties with greater ease as compared to more experienced social workers. This begs the question around the bearing of underlying policies for professional practice within the rehabilitation space in standardizing such resistance.

Obbarius et al. (2021) note that an individual's stress response is sturdily predicted by personal resources and the perceived level of stressors they experience. In generally distancing themselves from the emotional labour required in their line of work, it could be hypothesized that participants tried to alleviate probable looming anxieties or other antecedents of stress that define their working context. For example, Kira (2019) notes that developing the skills of self-awareness and self-reflexivity prompt processes of self-evaluation within the identity role that the individual undertakes. These processes, correspondingly those of appraisal as described in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theoretical

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framework, demarcate how an individual perceives their resources, limitations and strengths in confronting challenges or stressors specific to such role. It is then possible that participants in the current study avoided fully delving into self-reflective practices, and rather turned the spotlight onto their professional competencies (within the role defined by their professional identity), in order to minimize threat and sustain a sense of self that, for them, was competent and effective.

This finding was significant (taking into consideration that the central assumption of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model of stress and coping contends that any event can be potentially stressful), given that most participants initially resisted in identifying or admitting to appraising any events associated with facilitating rehabilitation groups as harmful, threatening or challenging. Rather, participants often normalized challenges (which is pertinent especially in a context characterized by the preponderance of challenges inherent in their line of work), as if to suggest that it should be them, as professionals, who must learn to adapt to the challenges-laden space they work in. Much as is evident in the research findings, it is not uncommon that trained professionals who seek to perform effectively in high-stress occupations with considerable exposure to situations likely to evoke intense emotions, such as the rehabilitation sector, have been trained to manage their challenging emotions by suppressing, denying, or compartmentalizing them (Indregard et al., 2018). This was evident in interviews, where participants made reference to their training as reinforcing the need to uphold professional standards while minimizing the emotional cost that the job demands. It is then reasonable to infer that, under these circumstances, participants understood these two components as mutually exclusive in the realm of professional practice within rehabilitative work. It could also be conjectured that participants' resistance to confront challenges then served as: (i) an implicit admission that to recognize these is tantamount to their work being reduced to futility, on the one hand; and/or on the other hand, (ii) an inherent fear that being

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heard expressing their concerns about their work may be misinterpreted as having misplaced priorities; both of which were not all-encompassing of the professional standards expected of them. The reluctance to acknowledge challenges may then stem from not wanting to confront these realities and unresolved conflict. This approach can seem adaptive in the short-term to buffer against potential perceived threats, and subsequently preserve psychological well-being and social functioning (Obbarius et al., 2021). However, questions around the extent of the long-term impact of the disavowal of human emotion on these professionals' overall well-being must be considered.

As described by the transactional model of stress of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), individuals may effectively navigate stressors by discovering internal and external coping mechanisms and resources that aid in navigating the stressor. It was clear in the study's findings that participants engaged in both problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, as defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), in response to the various stressors they encounter. Time management, administrative organization and boundary-setting were some of the few problem-focused coping strategies described by participants. This could reflect attempts at feelings of mastery and control in a bustling and demanding atmosphere to safeguard the delivery of effective services while retaining the accompanying feelings of personal fulfilment. However, of note, most coping strategies employed were emotion-focused, whereby overemphasizing the positive, acceptance and normalization, as well as distancing oneself from the source of the stressor were evident. While this form of coping can be adaptive and offer comfort in situations that may feel out of their control, participants' continued (and exclusive use) of these strategies could have led to increased stress and negative impact on psychological and physical well-being. This is consistent with Indregard et al.'s (2018) study, which found that health- and social workers who frequently experience emotional dissonance in their work reported elevated levels of both exhaustion and mental

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illness, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Physical health complications were likewise a result of the study, where poor emotional engagement and regulation were found to heighten the likelihood of medical illness (Indregard et al., 2018).

Even with a general sense of controllability and capability to manage stressors that accompanied participants' narratives in interviews, brief recognition was given to stressors that may be appraised to be too overwhelming, or not easily managed, and thus contributing to experiences of stress. This was seen particularly in participants who reflected on the negative psychological impact of rehabilitation work, as well as those who asserted their need for access to therapeutic spaces. It is then clear that the coping strategies engaged by participants, while perhaps somewhat effective in temporarily minimizing levels of stress, may not fully account for the sustained impact thereof.

5.2.3. Perceived Availability of Social Support

Literature on workplace stress is replete with discussions on the concept of employee movement as a reaction to job-related stress (Atkin-Plunk & Armstrong, 2013). Nonetheless, it is significant that this has not been the case for participants who, for the most part, have remained at NICRO over extended periods of time despite the enduring challenges they face. This may speak to the protective command that the perceived availability of social support has in times of duress (further elaborated in Chapter Two: Literature Review). Unanimously, participants described a strong perceived sense of community (and family) within their work environment and recounted the protective effects of what they perceived their relationships with colleagues to be on managing stressors. This is consistent with the TMSC framework guiding the current study, which views perceived social support as buffering against the adverse impact of stress (see Chapter Two: Literature Review) and directly contributing to overall well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Consistent with Atkin-Plunk and Armstrong's (2013) findings, participants associated reduced job stress with the perceived

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support from (and their subsequent trust of) their colleagues. Particularly, a focus was placed on fellow social workers who participants felt able to turn to for support in their occupational experiences. In turn, the resulting appraisals of these supportive relationships enhanced participants' sense of competence, where they often equated their own feelings of social security with a greater perceived ability to cope with and adapt to situations of adversity. Thus, the ability to perceive an available and reliable social support structure in the workplace proved as an important contributor to managing work demands and possible experiences of internal conflict for participants (Feeney & Collins, 2015).

Moreover, perceived social support is understood as enabling and influencing how and which coping strategies are engaged (Avcıoğlu et al., 2019). This is seen particularly in participants' engagement in support-seeking behaviour as a form of coping (as discussed in Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings). This coping strategy is typically activated by conditions or circumstances in which individuals may perceive support to be available in their social milieu. Alternatively, support-seeking may also be activated by a perceived unavailability of support (thereby seeking out support as a way of communicating their need to others). However, the latter was not explicitly the case for participants, who generally found solace in their expectation that support will be provided based on their belonging to a larger interconnected social network within the organization (Harandi et al., 2017). It is important, nevertheless, to highlight that the two participants who did not perceive social support to be accessible at their workspace strongly advocated for access to therapeutic services to mitigate the adverse effects of their job. This may allude to Knight's (2015) argument that the way in which support is appraised to be available plays a fundamental role in shaping emotional and psychological outcomes for individuals, such as social workers, working in demanding environments. This argument is further supported by the fact that in interviews, participants generally acknowledged two motivating factors to their commitment

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to their work. The first, which resonated across various elements of the psychological well-being of participants, included mobilizing and impacting change in their field of work. The second included their commitment to an organization that shows, for the most part, enduring support at peer and managerial level. Importantly, this support was perceived by participants to occur specifically when encompassing opportunities for professional growth and freedom. Therefore, in being able to develop their professional identity and endeavours through their perceived relationships with others (discussed below), participants expressed greater satisfaction, confidence and self-esteem. This was complemented by supervisory and weekly training spaces, which were understood by participants to be primers for professional development, ultimately resulting in an enhanced perceived access to resources of support and care. This likewise extended to participants' general perception of a greater support network outside of their immediate environment at work. In reflecting on their relationships with other stakeholders, as well as personal friendships and familial relationships, participants expressed appreciation toward those who were appraised to be 'on board' with providing support in personal and professional capacities. The belief of having these support networks outside of work was often deemed as protective by participants, who described greater feelings of encouragement, enhanced problem-solving and a greater sense of validation. Consistent with existing literature, it is then likely that the multiple challenges and adversities associated with facilitating rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders may be surmounted by the feelings of safety and comfort that result from the general perception that support systems are in place if needed (Siedlecki et al., 2014).

5.2.4. Identity Beyond the Self

The concept of identity was unexpectedly revealed as a strong foundation upon which participants recounted their narratives, and could thus not be ignored in the weight that it carried in contextualizing the findings of the study. While this theme does not directly

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address a particular research objective, the discussion therein rests on the assumption of the various functions of identity in determining how one understands, experiences and interacts with the world. While it is generally understood that the manner in which one presents themselves to the world shapes how they are perceived by others, it is likewise of importance in that an individual's identity is one of the determinants that influence one's own perception (or appraisal) of the world (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, the prevalence of (professional) identity referenced and narrated by participants is of significance in understanding how they appraised their encounters with the world to influence their experiences of stress, coping and social support. By extension, perceptions of identity are then also pivotal in understanding how individuals embed themselves into organizational objectives, often where values, attitudes and goals integral to their profession and context are internalized to form part of their own behaviour and self-concept (Levy et al., 2014). Ultimately, in the context of the current research, the findings in this theme are argued to represent 'voices of dissent' (or binaries laden in how this work was experienced by those within the sector) regarding the general consensus that often sees or regards working within the rehabilitative space as inherently stressful.

Within the TMSC framework, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) do not explicitly examine the role of identity in appraisal. However, their work provides a basis for understanding how cognitive processes, such as appraisal, can be framed by a range of individual factors encompassing elements of one's identity. The primary appraisal that individuals engage in order to assess the significance of a stressor in relation to their well-being could therefore be influenced by the role of identity on this process. This is consistent with Thoits's (2013) argument that the magnitude of the appraisal of a stressor and its impact on mental health depends on whether or not these occur in a highly valued role-identity domain. By suggestion, the author notes that individuals may draw on their personal beliefs, value

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systems and other identity-related factors to interpret and appraise the bearing and meaning of a stressor (Thoits, 2013). Additionally, according to their model, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasize the secondary appraisal, in which individuals assess the coping resources at their disposal to effectively address a recognized stressor. Kira (2019) contends that elements comprising identity, such as personal strengths and self-efficacy, influence how individuals perceive and utilize their coping resources.

Coincidentally, the stakeholders involved in rehabilitation groups for youth offenders in this study all represented the field of social work. In uncovering the meaning of professional identity among individuals who carry out complex, challenging and ambiguous functions in the public sector, Webb (2016) described efforts to understand how these identities are formed as a muddled terrain of which little is known about. While participants' personal and professional self-concepts were presented in varied ways in interviews, these were documented consistently through their bond or relation to others in the rehabilitative milieu. Although not explicitly explored within the research study, it could be surmised that the concept of *Ubuntu*, a way of living that is universal and which connects all humanity (Dolamo, 2013) – characterised by humane treatment of others in especially collectivist familial- and community contexts – resonated widely as an underlying tone in participants' understanding of their experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support. Specifically, the essence of a social worker in the rehabilitation context, as explained by participants, seemed to be held in a parallel fashion to the principles of *Ubuntu*, in that both typically speak to the embodiment of a collective responsibility towards the welfare of others, replacing an individual identity by a larger societal one (Dolamo, 2013). Kira (2019) maintains that identity heuristics are specific to context and thus depending on the environmental stressor being appraised, require that an individual embodies a salient and accessible identity role to regulate perception, appraisal and reappraisal processes, emotion

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and subsequent behaviour. Thus, an individual utilizes the self-schemas, beliefs, values, goals and assumptions associated with this role to appraise and reappraise a situation. Of note, participants engaged minimally with a sense of self that was removed from their occupational responsibilities or self-perceived duties to others. Contrary to Tonegawa's (2014) findings that NGO practitioners do not always identify with the goals of their place of employment (as discussed in Chapter Two: Literature Review), participants' narratives of self in the current study were often congruent with (and perhaps limited to) NICRO's organizational objectives. The greater the semblance between the two, the more this seemed to offer an enduring sense of coherence, self-esteem and security among participants. This was two-fold, in that: (i) it offered participants the perception of their ability to anticipate processes *(or transactions)* in the context of youth offender rehabilitation, and (ii) subsequently had the capacity to hold and apply their knowledge and judgement toward better functioning within such processes. In other words, the greater their ability to apply the knowledge, skills and resources available to them in working towards inherent cultural and organizational values, the more competent and effective participants understood themselves as. This, in turn, impacted how they appraised their ability to manage complex situations within the rehabilitation realm, and subsequently provide meaning to the stressful events they experience (Levy et al., 2014). This is important, specifically in resilience literature, which suggests that protective factors that contribute to overcoming adversity without hostile consequences include a sense of coherence and self-assurance (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). However, despite attempts to retain, safeguard and build competencies and resources utilized to increase a sense of self-efficacy (and subsequent control over environmental stressors), the potential or realized loss of these poses a significant threat to participants' identity (Kira, 2019). This could explain the link between a view of self that is competent among participants and their ability to impact and/or create change. It could be inferred that showcasing (and holding onto) their professional identity and

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competencies in interviews strengthened feelings of self-efficacy and worth that underlay participants' awareness of a sense of responsibility to others, while simultaneously searching for acknowledgement from others (including the researcher) to further eliminate the threat of loss of their competent self-image.

On this basis, it is surmised that participants' difficulty in distinguishing between personal and occupational identities may have resulted from the stressors and context they recalled as they told their narratives. It is possible that this provided a platform on which to engage a meaning-making process, whereby occupational or professional identity goals became important to participants in scaffolding personal meaning (Baumeister & Landau, 2018). The embodiment of this role, an identity beyond the self, then likely gave way to cathartic experiences, in which participants' ability to relate to their clients (ultimately through the knowledge and skills they evaluated themselves to have), allowed them to make meaning of their work, purpose and identity therein. This, in turn, likely minimized experiences of stress.

The suggestion then is not that the identity of participants is fixed or dependent on the organizational objectives of NICRO. Rather, in the process of slowly developing a professional identity all the way through university education, field work, supervision and work experience, as well as embodying their own cultural and customary beliefs, participants were exposed to differing value perspectives. In attempts to integrate these, their focus was shifted onto developing and maintaining a sense of identity that existed beyond the self, and which would eventually be recognized by other stakeholders, in order to develop a personal system of appraisal that deemed them to be competent and fulfilling of a greater sense of purpose within the South African rehabilitation context. Participants acknowledged the manner in which they had dabbled in many skills to develop, represented and embodied their profession. While largely discussing these processes in relation to their work with youth

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offenders, participants likewise recognized how these acted as an extension of self. Accordingly, participants described their work as part of who they were, with little instances across interviews in which a clear distinction between personal and professional identities was evident. Moreover, it seemed that participants saw themselves reflected through the eyes of others, and appeared to have some difficulty engaging with a sense of self that did not result from such perspective. The risk associated with this frame of reference, nonetheless, was the equalization of professional competence and achievement with personal ability and/or success. Doing this may arguably have inhibited participants' own ability to engage in greater personal self-reflection, and regardless of whether this process was a conscious or unconscious one, may have influenced their stress-appraisal processes within facilitating rehabilitation programmes (see above for a more detailed discussion). This is supported by the fact that the intersection of identity and appraisal literature has increasingly gained momentum in recognizing the potential impact of identity-related factors on the appraisal of stressors and consequent coping strategies (Asencio, 2013; Kira, 2019).

5.3. Chapter Summary

Chapter Five provided a comprehensive discussion around the significance of the study's findings. This was done by addressing the research questions, aim and objectives, while concurrently contextualizing findings within the principles of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter One. This was done in light of providing meaning to context.

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6. CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

6.1. Chapter Introduction

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter of the mini-thesis, deliberates the contribution of the study. The chapter likewise considers limitations of the study, which focuses particularly on aspects which may have impacted or influenced the study's overall findings, as well as offers recommendations for future research. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a summation of the implications for interventions and policy framework, specific to both NICRO and the greater rehabilitative sector.

6.2. Contribution of the Study

The study has contributed to South African literature on many levels. The study contributed insights that mainly rested on better understanding the experience of community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders from a psychological lens. By extension, the study shed light on possible policy and systemic loopholes associated with the rehabilitative agenda in South Africa, and thus gave way to consider the larger relevance of the research. In line with the research objectives, the study contributed the following within the context of the offender rehabilitation milieu:

- The study highlighted the enabling and disabling factors underpinning the successful management and facilitation of rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders in South Africa, and by consequence shed light on stressors and challenges associated therein.
- The study identified important protective and mitigating factors within the NPO sphere that buffer against experiences of distress, such as access to knowledge and perceived availability of social support.

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- The study offered insight into the adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms adopted by facilitators in coping with the demands of their facilitation roles in rehabilitation programmes.
- The study revealed a salient motivational factor present within the crime prevention milieu which focused particularly around the ability to serve and impact change.
- The study utilized a theoretical framework that was accessible and relevant to the context of the study to frame greater awareness around stress-appraisal in a setting that is typically limited in accessibility to external and possible internal resources of coping.

6.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the various insights gleaned by the findings of the study, certain limitations require deliberation in order to fully understand the nature of the conclusions made therein. By chance, only participants in the social work profession were interviewed in this study, a variable of which may have significantly accounted for and shaped participants' experiences as facilitators of rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders. The particular and unique conditions under which social work is practiced may therefore inhibit the transferability of the findings pertaining specifically to stressors and perceived social support, as these were often contextualized within interviews against the social work background. Given that data collection was limited to only one organization, despite efforts to the contrary (discussed in Chapter Three: Methodology), the findings did not account for the experiences of other stakeholders involved in the facilitation of rehabilitation programmes, such as volunteers or other healthcare professionals, whose narratives may differ on the basis of this confounding variable. Data collection was thus not inclusive of all community stakeholders, which renders some difficulty in ascertaining whether the findings are applicable to all or limited only to

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those working in, for example, NPOs. It can be posited that many findings are still transferable to individuals working within the crime prevention and offender reintegration services, as well as those in the correctional services, where similar contextual factors may be present. Nevertheless, the findings of the current study provide a compelling rationale for further enquiry into the psychological experiences of community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes of youth offenders. Thus, future research could benefit if it elicited responses, narratives and experiences from a diverse pool of stakeholders to gain varied perspectives of what it means to work within the rehabilitative space.

Secondly, despite provisions being made for interviews to be conducted in Afrikaans, isiXhosa and isiZulu, only two participants requested to be interviewed in a language other than English. This may have possibly posed limitations on how participants engaged in the interview and may have further implicated greater risk for misunderstanding between interviewer and interviewee. This would be further confounded by the inherent disadvantages of telephonic interviews, such as inability to interpret participants' body language, which may have posited hindrance on interpretation of the meaning of the message being conveyed. In considering the socio-political climate in which the current study took place, accounting for contextual factors that may influence data collection procedures in future research proves important. In this research, avenues in which to conduct interviews were constrained by participants' inability to access resources such as the internet, as well as additional challenges such as possible language barriers, the Covid-19 pandemic and national loadshedding (aptly defined as planned power supply interruptions). It is thus recommended that further logistically viable options for data collection be considered, such as in-person interviews, to mitigate similar difficulties in future research.

Thirdly, most interviews were conducted toward the end of the year. This coincided with tight schedules and increased organizational pressures as participants prepared for

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organizational year-end closure. This may have enabled grounds for bias on participants' reports of stress, particularly given that end-of-year burnout and fatigue, as well as other mental health difficulties, are common during this time of year. It is thus recommended that the period (such as time of year) in which data collection ensues in future research be carefully considered to account for any factors that may influence any psychological concepts being explored.

Lastly, the sample size, although deemed appropriate, was smaller than originally proposed. This was due to limited availability of participants in an already limited research population. While in qualitative research, this sample is rich enough data, Leung (2015) also notes that generalizability is not an expected attribute in exploratory research. Nonetheless, given the qualitative nature of the study, which sought to elicit participants' responses about their experience of stress, coping and perceived social support within their rehabilitative work, within their natural contexts, this meant that the quantification of the nature of the relationships between these variables under study could not be determined – something that studies anchored in quantitative research methodologies allow. Therefore, it is recommended that future research on community stakeholders' experience of stress, coping and perceived social support could use quantitative or mixed-methods designs that would not only quantify the relationships between variables, but also perhaps observe these relationships at different time points to ascertain if there are any significant manifestations of stress, coping and perceived social support at different timeframes within the rehabilitative sector. This deeper enquiry would provide further conceptual clarity around the need for staff psychological support in these spaces.

6.4. Implications for Interventions and Policy Framework (Within Rehabilitative Work)

In light of the setting in which the research findings ensued, a few implications are noted specifically for NICRO and similar rehabilitative environments in the hopes of

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fostering insight into possible experiences of stress among stakeholders, as well as optimizing existing enabling factors that contribute toward stakeholder resilience and coping. These are explored below.

Participants' concerns around the limited access to resources, and subsequent need to utilize personal means to reach organizational targets (such as the use of their own airtime for client contact) should be addressed to the best extent possible. Though participants demonstrated resilience in their ability to manipulate available resources at work, tapping into personal resources, especially financial, may contribute to experiences of stress and subsequently impact work engagement (Tonegawa, 2014). Giving priority to addressing participants' reservations may ensure that their work engagement is a *proactive response (taking initiative and actively identifying and addressing issues before they escalate, such as problem-solving and planning)* rather than a *reactive response (responding to an issue after it has become a problem, such as blame or resentment)* to their working conditions (Chen & Fellenz, 2020).

Furthermore, certain processes that are already in place at NICRO are raised as important in the review of these implications. Access to opportunities for further professional development in the organization was flagged as a contributing factor to enhanced feelings of competency and effectiveness. This subsequently encourages greater engagement in adaptive coping strategies and reduced stress (Amirkhan & Marckwordt, 2017). On this basis, ensuring the continuation of the already-existing weekly training sessions as well as consistent availability of supervisory spaces is suggested (and commended). Within these settings, it would likewise be valuable to create space for recognition and appreciation of employees' efforts and achievements to further enhance the overall familial sentiment shared between participants and tap into a proficient sense of self. Suggestions include continued team-building activities, small gatherings to commemorate collective achievements,

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employee encouragement and involvement in organizational matters, and the implementation of policies which promote work-life balance.

Lastly, given the expressed need by some participants for psychological intervention, as well as accounting for the fact that participants found it beneficial to share their experiences in interviews, it is recommended that staff mental health programmes be implemented at NICRO (facilitated by mental health professionals working independently of the organization) to address the psychological impact of the unique and intensive weight of working in crime prevention and offender rehabilitation and reintegration. Of note, since findings showed that shared spaces are important to participants' sense of belonging, group intervention (group therapy and/or support groups) as a means to further explore psychological experiences could possibly further facilitate optimal engagement. Participants currently hold the knowledge that their colleagues share in their *occupational* experiences and challenges. Nevertheless, shifting this shared experience into a *therapeutic* space can further develop support networks within NICRO while encouraging individual well-being.

The study also allowed consideration for the greater implications of the research findings. In understanding these within the circumstances they occur, the study revealed greater gaps at contextual and systemic levels that both directly and indirectly contribute to and perpetuate the research findings:

- The study addressed a significant gap in local and global literature by exploring literary terrain that remains fairly under-researched.
- The study emphasized the need for additional psychological containment and support for facilitators of rehabilitation programmes, to supplement existing organizational supervisory and collegial support structures.

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- In light of the reform agenda around offender rehabilitation and reintegration in South Africa, the study revealed that the lack of partnership between key community stakeholders involved in such processes is a restrictive factor in working toward common goals.
- Though brief, the study drew attention to the pervasive current and historical adverse contextual and socio-political challenges in South Africa faced by facilitators of offender rehabilitation programmes, such as exposure to violence, limited access to resources and overburdened services.

6.5. Conclusion

Chapter Six presented reflections on the study contributions, which provided opportunities to consider study limitations aided by proposed recommendations for prospective research in comparable areas. These were presented before a concluding discussion ensued pertaining to the implications for interventions and policy framework within rehabilitative work.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Ethics Clearance Certificate

11 August 2021

Ms R Appleby
Psychology
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

HSSREC Reference Number: HS21/5/55

Project Title: The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders.

Approval Period: 10 August 2021 – 10 August 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

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Appendix B: NICRO Institutional Permission

NICRO [Association Incorporated under Section 21]
Registration Number: 2006/032333/08
NPO Registration Number: 003-147 NPO

08 September 2021

Dear Roxanne

Re: Permission to conduct Research

This letter has a reference dated 03/09/2021. The organization would like to grant you permission to undertake Research with KZN Nicro staff on "The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programme for youth offenders".

The research findings will be welcomed. Should you require any assistance, the area manager or Durban supervisors may be contacted.

Yours faithfully

SF zondi-

Acting Area Manager-KZN

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Chairperson: Mr Max Moyo. Vice Chairperson: Lalla Yerouloma. Finance Director: Ms Fanisa Lamola.
Dir: Ms Lois Elizabeth Hardy. Dir: Ms Lee Coetzer. Dir: Ms Rachel Mokoena. Dir: Judge Nathan Erasmus
Chief Executive Officer: Soraya Solomon.
1 Harrington Street. Cape Town. 8001. South Africa. PO Box 10005. Caledon Square. 7905. South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)21 462 0017. Fax: +27 (0)21 462 2447. info@nicro.co.za. www.nicro.org.za.

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NICRO External Research Request Form 2017

All external researchers who wish to conduct academic research at NICRO must complete the form below and submit with **required documentation**. Feedback on the request will be returned.

Important Notes:

- Not all requests for permission to conduct research are approved
- NICRO cannot incur any costs
- NICRO does not assist with the securing of research funds for external researchers

Applicant Full Name:	Roxanne Appleby
Applicant ID Number	9612310143089
Applicant Contact Details:	roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com / 076 870 4855
Academic Institution:	University of the Western Cape (UWC) **Degree:** Masters (Clinical Psychology)
Academic Supervisor Name:	Professor Nceba Z. Somhlaba & Ms Zorina Noordien
Academic Supervisor Contact Details:	Professor Nceba Z. Somhlaba: nsomhlaba@uwc.ac.za Ms Zorina Noordien: zonoordien@uwc.ac.za
Topic of Proposed Research:	The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders
Proposed Timeframe:	Data collection will ensue over approximately 2/3 weeks.
Location of Research:	Across provinces (via means of a telephonic platform – at full cost of the researcher).
Extent of NICRO Involvement:	Identify facilitators of rehabilitation programmes for youth (adolescent to age 24) offenders at NICRO; 1 hour interview per facilitator.
Description of units of analysis	Participants (facilitators) should be 18 years or older and be proficient in English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa or isiZulu. Participants must have been involved in the management or facilitation of at least one youth offender rehabilitation programme at NICRO and have access to a mobile phone for data collection purposes.
Targets for unit of analysis (# of people etc)	Target of approximately 10 to 15 participants.
Description of proposed research methods	Ethics clearance from the UWC Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and institutional permission from NICRO will be obtained. The informed consent and information letters will then be sent to prospective participants. This will be followed by a telephonic call, whereby the aim, purpose and nature of the research will be described and verbal informed consent from the participant will be obtained. Thereafter, written informed consent will be obtained from participants and interviews will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for the participant. Data will be collected through individual, semi-structured telephonic interviews. Interviews will be approximately 40-60 minutes in length and will be conducted in English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa. The telephonic interview will ensue at the cost of the researcher and will be recorded for the purpose of analyses. All participant information will remain confidential, and all personal identifiers will be removed from each interview transcript to ensure anonymity. Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary and

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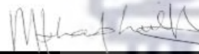
NICRO External Research Request Form 2017

	participants will have the right to decline participation as well as withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or adverse consequences.		
	Required Documentation:	Attached	
▪	Research proposal	**Yes**	No
▪	Approval from university ethics committee	**Yes**	No
▪	Consent form	**Yes**	No

Approved by NICRO Operations Officer



Maureen Mphaphuli

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Appendix C: Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 3717, Fax: 27 21-959 3515

E-mail: roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Roxanne Appleby at the University of the Western Cape, under the supervision of Prof Nceba Z. Somhlaba and Ms Zorina Noordien. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a facilitator of a youth offender rehabilitation programme at NICRO or Khulisa. The purpose of this research project is to better understand your experiences of stress, coping and perceived social support in facilitating a rehabilitation programme for youth offenders.

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What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to have an interview with the researcher about your experiences in facilitating the programme, the support that you feel you have available to you and how you cope with the challenges of the programme. The interview will be approximately 40-60 minutes and conducted in English, Afrikaans or isiXhosa. The interview will be telephonic and will occur at the cost of the researcher.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. This research project involves making audiotapes of you. This is so that the researcher can transcribe and analyse the data from the interview. To ensure your anonymity, the researcher will change your name to a pseudonym

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(i.e. 'Participant A') and will remove any information that may personally identify you. To ensure your confidentiality, consent forms and audio recordings will be stored on a password-protected personal computer. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others. In this event, we will inform you that we have to break confidentiality to fulfil our legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study, for example the interview evoking feelings of distress related to your experiences. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

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What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher learn more about the experiences of community stakeholders in the facilitation of rehabilitation programmes among youth offenders. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the stress, coping and perceived social support among community stakeholders in the context of youth rehabilitation.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Roxanne Appleby, a Clinical Psychology Masters student in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Roxanne at roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Research Supervisor
Professor Nceba Z. Somhlaba
Department of Psychology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
nsomhlaba@uwc.ac.za

Research Co-Supervisor
Ms Zorina Noordien
Department of Psychology
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535
zonoordien@uwc.ac.za

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Head of Psychology Department
Prof Anita Padmanabhanunni
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
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Tel: 021 959 2842
apadmana@uwc.ac.za

Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences
Prof Anthea Rhoda
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville
7535
Tel: 021 959 2746
chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

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Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville
7535
Tel: 021 959 4111
e-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS21/5/55

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Appendix D: Consent Form

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Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3717, Fax: 27 21-959 3515
E-mail: roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

___ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

___ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature……………………………….

Date………………………

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Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville

7535

Tel: 021 959 4111

e-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

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Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3717, Fax: 27 21-959 3515
E-mail: roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introductory Questions

1. How old are you?
2. What gender do you identify with?
3. Where are you from?
4. What is your home language?
5. How did you start working with NICRO/Khulisa?
6. How long have you been working with NICRO/Khulisa?
7. What are your roles at NICRO/Khulisa?
8. How many times have you facilitated the youth rehabilitation programme?

Motivation

9. What motivated you to work with youth offenders?
10. What led you to volunteer with NICRO/Khulisa?
11. What did you expect when you started volunteering at NICRO/Khulisa?
12. In your opinion, what motivates you to stay and continue working at NICRO/Khulisa?

Training

13. Did you receive any training for the programme?
    - If yes, how did you find the training process?
    - If no, do you think training would be necessary?
14. What did you enjoy about the training?

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15. Is there anything you feel was missing from the training?
16. In your opinion, how do you think the training helped you in facilitating the programme?
17. Does having training help you deal with any challenges of the programme?

Rehabilitation Programme

18. What is it like for you to witness the youth attend the programme?
19. In your opinion, should the community be involved in the process of rehabilitation of the youth?
20. What are some of the challenges that you have experienced in facilitating this programme?
21. How do you cope with these challenges?

Support

22. When you experience any difficulties within your work, do you feel that you can turn to other volunteers/facilitators for support?
23. What other kinds of support do you feel you have in facilitating the programme?
24. Is there any other support that you would suggest for facilitators of the programme?

Concluding Questions

25. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your work in the programme?

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Appendix F: Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 3717, Fax: 27 21-959 3515
E-mail: roxanne_appleby@hotmail.com

RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Project Title: The exploration of stress, coping and perceived social support in community stakeholders involved in rehabilitation programmes for youth offenders

As a research assistant of this project, I understand that I will be conducting private and confidential interviews. Information will be shared by interviewees who agreed to participate in this research on the condition that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honour this confidentiality agreement.

I agree not to discuss or share any information from the interviews with any third parties except the researcher of this research project. Any violation of this and the terms detailed below would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards. I confirm that I will adhere to the agreement in full.

I, Asanda Zama Kunene (research assistant), agree to maintain full confidentiality of all research data received from the participants and researcher related to this research study, including that:

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1. I will hold in strictest confidence the identity of any individual, as well as any information revealed during interviews and subsequent recordings. This likewise applies to any associated documents that I may receive to assist me in the preparation and conduction of the interviews.
2. I will not make copies of any audio recordings or other research data, unless specifically requested to do so by the researcher.
3. I will not discuss or provide the research data to any third parties.
4. I will conduct the interviews in private, and I will store all study-related data in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
5. After consulting with the researcher, all data provided or created for purposes of this agreement, including any back-up records, will be returned to the researcher and permanently deleted (such as any information stored on my computer hard drive, USBs, emails, etc).

Asanda Zama Kunene		19 February 2023
(Research Assistant's Name)	(Research Assistant's Signature)	(Date)

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